the weekly
Standard

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JOE WILSON'S 15 MINUTES
MATTHEW CONTINETTI

ARE WE WINNING OR LOSING?

TOM DONNELLY, STEPHEN SCHWARTZ, RICHARD STARR, ROBERT KAGAN & WILLIAM KRISTOL on Iraq

IRWIN M. STELZER on the Bush administration

CRAIG CHARNEY on Afghanistan

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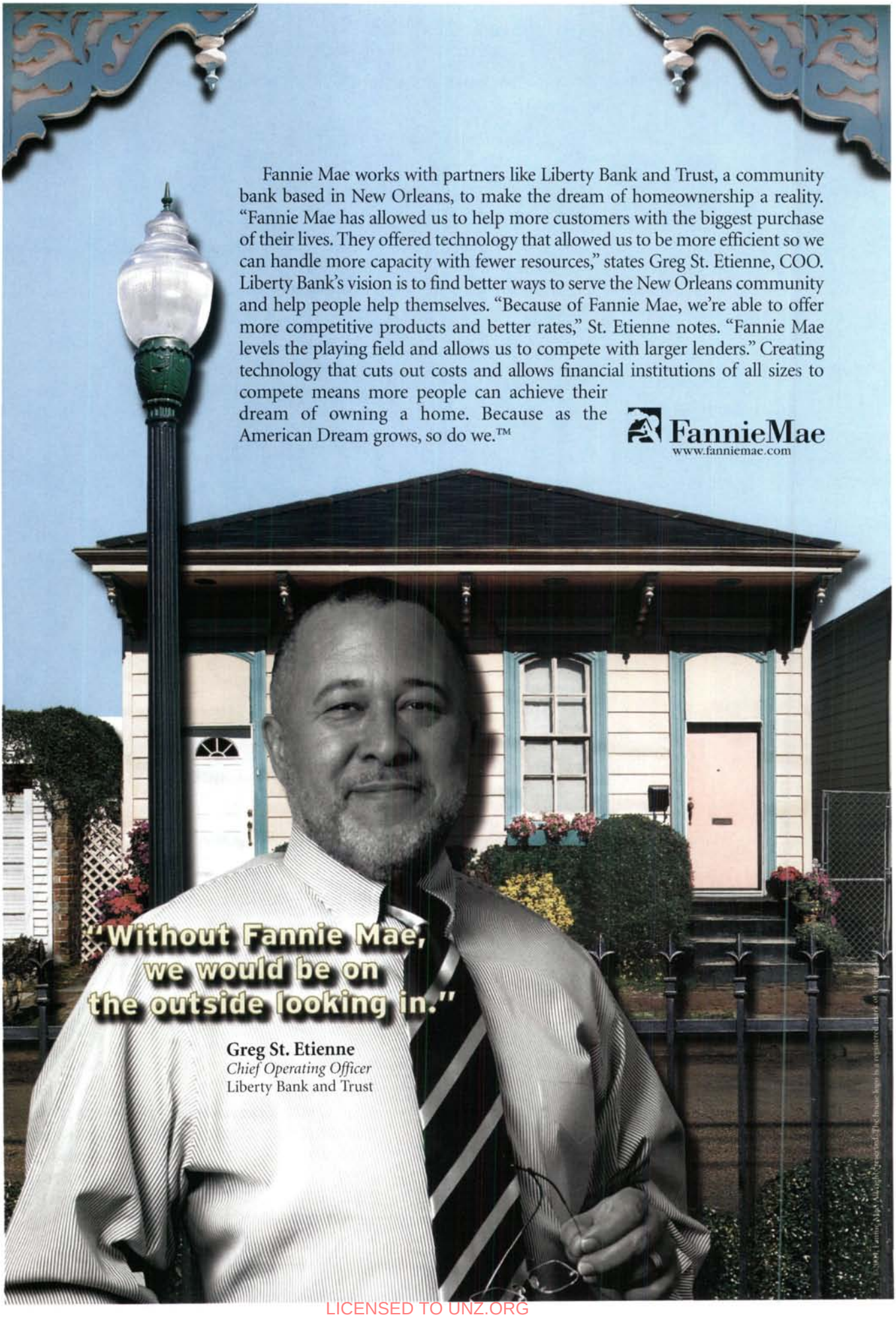

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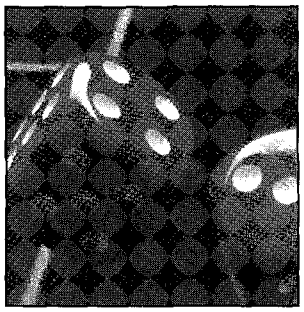

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Blessed Are Those Who Pander

Speaking at a meeting of the Anti-Defamation League here in Washington last week, John Kerry reflected on the deep connection he'd made with the people of Israel: "We traveled also to the Sea of Galilee, to the Christian sites, the religious sites, actually stood on the Mount of the Beatitudes and read the Sermon on the Mount to those gathered with me."

THE SCRAPBOOK is amused by the workings of Sen. Kerry's brain—that business where it occurs to him: *oops, shouldn't have said "Christian sites," they're Jews, maybe if I add "religious sites" right away no one will notice.* THE SCRAPBOOK is further amused by the thought of Kerry holding forth like . . . well, like Jesus.

But we've got to admit: Others have done the same. There was that famed biblical scholar, for example, the Rev. Howard Dean. Dr. Dean, you'll recall, was one day lecturing on the Book of Job—which turned out to be in the *Old* Testament; who knew?—and didst then recall his own trip to the Holy Land not long before. And, verily: "If you know much about the Bible—which I do—to see and be in a place where Christ was and understand the intimate history of what was going on 2,000 years ago is an exceptional experience."

Readers are here invited to play the home version of THE SCRAPBOOK game: Write your own sarcastic generalization about the pomposity of Democratic presidential primary candidates.

Ordinarily, of course, we'd write one ourselves. But in this case, it probably wouldn't be right. First off, there's the problem that Republicans do it, too. As David Brooks noted in our pages last January, Senate majority leader Bill Frist has similarly indulged himself: "On one memorable day during a tour of Israel, Senator Frist stood on the spot where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount and read the sermon to the tour group. He electrified them with his simple faith and devotion."

Moreover, THE SCRAPBOOK itself has stood at the Temple Mount and heard the Sermon read aloud. It's a bit of a gimmick, sure; many tour guides offer it. But, shucks, just this once, perhaps, we're prepared to admit it: Kerry (and Dean, and Frist) are on to something. It *is* a "privilege" to be "standing on the mount alone in this incredible solitude, looking down onto the water in an absolutely beautiful soft day, and reading and talking about what it meant, what the meaning was of this rabbi who was preaching on the mountain as his ministry of three years had begun."

Here Kerry sounds almost humble, doesn't he? No need to panic, though: It's the *always meek* who'll inherit the earth. Doing it on the stump doesn't count. At least, we *hope* it doesn't. ♦

Blessed Is the Reluctant "Correction"

Also in the Holy Land last week, National Public Radio's Julie McCarthy reported on Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's plan for withdrawal from the Gaza Strip:

> The settlers rallied support saying Israel was withdrawing under fire. But there was ample evidence yesterday to show that their continued presence in Gaza is provoking bloodshed. Israeli troops shot dead two Palestinian gunmen after the men ambushed a mother and her four small daughters outside the Gaza settlement of Gush Katif. The family was shot and killed on their way to the Israeli city of Ashkelon where they intended to campaign against Ariel Sharon and his plan to uproot them from Gaza.

So *they had it coming to 'em*—didn't they—in going around "provoking bloodshed" like that, the first such bloodshed worth mentioning being, of course, Israeli troops shooting Palestinian gunmen.

Maybe Ms. McCarthy could have done a slightly better job informing her listeners just what it was those gunmen had moments before been up to? From the *Jerusalem Post*:

> The dead were identified as Tali Hatuel, 34, eight months pregnant, and her daughters Hila, 11, Hadar, 9, Roni, 7, Merav, 2, all from the settlement of Katif. . . . Police said the white Citroen station wagon, carrying the family, spun off the road after the initial shooting, then the attackers approached the vehicle and shot the occupants at close range.

All the victims had multiple gunshot wounds to the head. Tali Hatuel, the pregnant mother, was also shot once, very carefully, in the belly. Her two-year-old daughter, Merav, was still strapped into her car seat when rescue workers reached the scene.

NPR later posted a "correction" of Julie McCarthy's story on its website. "The purpose of the report was to take note of the continuing violence," the statement read. "The story in no way meant to suggest that the killings were justified. NPR regrets that the report made any such implication."

Mostly, though, we bet NPR regrets the deluge of listener complaints that apparently forced it to issue this piece of weaselry in the first place. ♦

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When Men Shall Say All Manner of Evil Against You Falsely

Separated at birth?

I have some reservations about people who have never been in the face of battle, so to speak, who are making cavalier decisions about sending men and women out to die. A person who comes immediately to mind in that regard is Richard Perle, who, thank God, tendered his resignation and no longer will be even a semiofficial person in this administration. . . . I call them utopians. I don't care whether utopians are Vladimir Lenin on a sealed train to Moscow or Paul Wolfowitz. Utopians, I don't like. You're never going to bring utopia, and you're going to hurt a lot of people in the process of trying to do it.

—State Department chief of staff Larry Wilkerson, quoted by GQ, *May 4*

Now when President Bush became the president, many of these people came into government: . . . Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of state . . . Richard Perle, former chairman of the Defense Policy Board at the Pentagon. And it's interesting that he had a nickname titled "the prince of darkness" . . . Now, the thinking of these neoconservatives is written of in scripture. In the book of Revelations 2 and 9 it reads, "'I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.'"

—Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan at the National Press Club, May 3

Blessed is the Day! Even *More* Bad News for Al Franken!

If THE SCRAPBOOK remembers correctly, it was only last week that we had the pleasure to report on a string of embarrassments lately being suffered by Air America, political liberalism's new round-the-clock radio network, home to "The O'Franken Factor"—starring the Obnoxious One—and various other programs nobody's ever heard of. First, the network lost its signal in Chicago and Los Angeles after a billing dispute shuttered its offices in both cities. Then, Air America's CEO resigned amid talk of internal turmoil. *Then*, Air America's director of programming was forced out of his post and replaced.

And now, just this past Friday, comes news that Air America's board chairman, Evan Cohen, has abruptly severed his relationship with the project. Also resigning: Air America's vice chairman—make that *ex*-vice chairman—Rex Sorensen, Cohen's investment partner.

If an "O'Franken Factor" falls in the ratings because nobody's there to hear it, does it make any noise? ♦

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Casual

House of Cards

Last week, at the cash register of a sporting-goods store, I saw what looked like a display of baseball cards. It annoys me that in corner stores, where baseball cards ought to be sold, they are less and less present. Why? Because children no longer get allowances to mete out, nickel by nickel, for jacks and licorice and Three Musketeers. Instead, television enlists them in screaming lobbying campaigns for $189 skateboards and mortgage-endangering trips to Disney World. Society values families less as a means of sheltering and educating children than as a means of yoking grownup incomes to kids' unconstrainable appetites for junk. That's why baseball cards are sold where scooters are sold, not where ice cream is sold.

But this was just the beginning of my disillusionment. I noticed an 11-year-old tearing open a pack of trading cards, with his friends clustered around him.

"Hey, I got a Nalper!"

"What's a Nalper?"

I expected the kid with the card to flip it over and read: "*Switch-hitting utility man Rex Nalper socked a pair of two-baggers for the Tribe in the first of a twinbill after being claimed off waivers from the Chisox. He likes to hunt in the off-season.*"

Alas. Kids don't care much any more about baseball cards—which neither explode, sparkle, emit weird noises, nor expose their navels. They care about cartoons and Japanese video games, as I realized when this one continued: "It's a Nalper! It lets you nalp two of the other guy's splutorgs!"

"Yeah! Unless he has a mimzor card!"

"Yeah! Or a puke gun!"

Between the ages of 7 and 12, I would start buying baseball cards the day the first series came into the store in March, and spend every spare coin on them until the last series was being packed away in November. I kept them neatly stacked in boxes, sorted into teams and then alphabetized. Half my vocabulary, much of my math, and all of my ability to pronounce Spanish surnames comes from baseball cards.

With their judicious deployment of photos, statistics, chronological tables, prose narrative, and sometimes cartoons, these were a miracle of the biographer's art. I wish I could pick one up to give you an example, but as it happens, I don't own a single baseball card. Too bad. They're worth a lot of money nowadays. But, junior year in college, I sold my entire collection to pay for . . . what was it again? Textbooks? A beaver coat? Cocaine? Occasionally the memory jolts me awake in the middle of the night and makes me sob. Not often—maybe twice a week or so.

I console myself that I was doomed to get ripped off anyway. The collection I sold in college was the second one I had assembled and lost. Fascism—or "the desire to be part of something larger than yourself," as the same phenomenon is called when mainstream politicians invoke it—cost me my first. Billy Boyle, the fat kid next door, didn't have many cards. But he explained to me one afternoon that if four of us (Billy, my two best friends, and I) put all our cards together in one Super Baseball Card Club, then we would have every card there was. He was telling the truth, in the sense that I would be telling the truth if I told Tiger Woods that if we put our golf skills together and split the profits, one of us might win the Masters.

The Super Baseball Card Club did indeed have every card—some of them in quintuplicate—but the collection could only be viewed in the Super Baseball Card Clubhouse, which was Billy's bedroom. As the distinction between the Super Baseball Card Club and Billy's personal property grew harder and harder to descry, my friends and I sought to withdraw from the arrangement. But secession was against the bylaws, which, in turn, were hard to distinguish from Billy's threat to give a bloody nose to anyone who told his parents about the club.

Billy was thuggish and slow. He never understood, even in sixth grade, that if you bought a Monopoly property for $350 and gave the banker $500, you got $150, not $250, change. ("Because three plus two equals five!" he reasoned.) After Billy knocked the table over a few times, we agreed to give him an extra $100 every time he needed change. He was thick enough that he always lost anyway. This ought to dispel the idea that worldly success rests on a "head for figures." For, as only the most naive reader will need to be told, Billy is today an absurdly rich man. The biggest lesson that I learned from baseball cards is that such rewards tend to tumble into the hands of those who, if there were any justice in the world, would have their splutorgs nalped with a puke gun.

Christopher Caldwell

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Culture Shock

In "O, My America" (May 3), James W. Ceaser provides an insightful review of Samuel Huntington's excellent book, *Who Are We?* Huntington's book addresses our nation's "identity crisis," which, he says, is leading us toward national disintegration. Huntington treats American Culture (called "Anglo-Protestantism") as the core of our national identity, while deemphasizing the American Creed. He says that it was out of the Culture that Creed developed, while Creed is insufficient to keep a nation together.

In contrast, Ceaser likens the disparity between Creed and Culture to the war between rationalism and religion. He focuses upon the need to find the proper relation between Creed and Culture. He claims that Huntington in the past "was too Creedal" and is now "too Cultural."

I happen to agree with Huntington that Culture is primary, while Creed is secondary. Yet both Huntington and Ceaser miss the fundamental point: Creed and Culture act in unison. Both are being undermined in today's America. Both require a renaissance.

Allen Weingarten
Morristown, NJ

The final paragraph of James W. Ceaser's review of Samuel P. Huntington's new book, *Who Are We?* begins, "Samuel Huntington is a fine asset to the nation he loves." I was pleased to no end that a professor of political science had the courage to not only dignify Samuel Huntington with this praise but to also put it in print.

Indeed, Huntington's work is not for the faint of heart. It requires rereading, meditation, and discussion. But each work is a masterpiece of political science theory applied to social realities. And yet Huntington is not read in many political science classes these days—often because of the very qualities that Ceaser so articulately praises in his review.

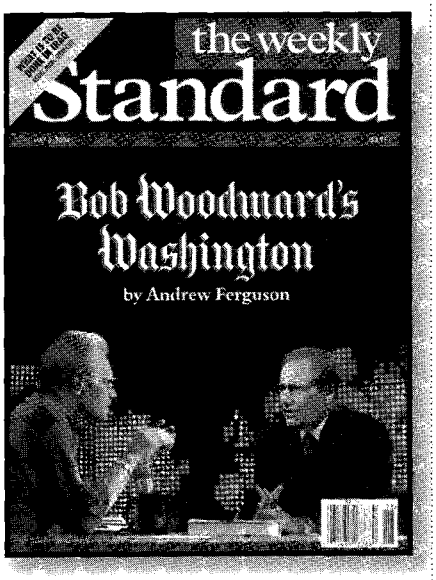
You see, Huntington has always clearly articulated the reasons why the cultures and populations of nation-states become strong economically, socially, and politically, or else disintegrate. These ideas have never appealed to left-leaning academics and multiculturalists, who believe nationality is a fictive concept. Yet, by rejecting the importance of nationality, these academics help create a balkanized culture. And such a culture can no longer sustain a national identity. The end result? Anarchy.

Henry Sheffield
Arlington, VA

Past Imperfect

Jonathan V. Last doesn't address an important reason why the FAA didn't change its pre-9/11 security policy, or "Common Strategy": fear of lawsuits ("The Foreseeable Past," May 3).

If a pilot resisted a hijacker's attempt to take over an aircraft and a passenger died as a result, the pilot—and by extension, the airline—would've been blamed. On the other hand, if a pilot complied with a hijacker's demands and all the passengers died, the hijacker would be blamed. From a liability standpoint, then, more deaths were easier to handle than one death and ensuing lawsuits.



Of course, as the 9/11 Commission—for all its faults—has shown, *it didn't matter* how many terrorists threatened to use airplanes as weapons. There was simply no public support for an increased security policy prior to September 11, 2001. The country wasn't on a war footing. Before the attacks, anyone who considered resisting a hijacker would have been held back by furious fellow passengers. Times change.

Michele Kerr
Santa Clara, CA

One does not need to fault the FAA for its failure to heed the various intelligence and security scenarios before the September 11 terrorist attacks. The FAA failed in a simpler fashion. Had the FAA required a level of scrutiny close to what Israel's national airline, El Al, has practiced for the past 30 years, the September 11 attacks would almost certainly not have occurred. Sure, the inconvenience would have caused a slump in air travel. But that would've been nothing like the slump that followed the attacks on September 11.

Mark Goldstein
Mercer Island, WA

Jonathan V. Last's "The Foreseeable Past" shows that it was foreseeable, indeed foreseen by some, that suicidal terrorists might use hijacked aircraft as guided missiles. The problem was that there wasn't any acceptance of the reality of such a threat by those with the authority to effect appropriate changes in security policy. They obviously thought the threat was not worth the worry.

Since it appears that no one with foresight and authority was pressing for these obviously necessary changes, it follows that all were unable, or unwilling, to confront and clear the conceptual hurdle involved in thinking like suicidal jihadists. Unfortunately it took the horror of September 11 to help us clear that hurdle.

John F. Cannon
New York, NY

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Democracy Now

We do not know how close the American effort in Iraq may be to irrecoverable failure. We are inclined to believe, however, that the current Washington wisdom—that the United States has already failed and there is nothing to do now but find a not-too-damaging way to extricate ourselves—is far too pessimistic, a panicked reaction to the difficulties in Falluja and with Moktada al-Sadr, as well as to the disaster of Abu Ghraib. We are also appalled at the cavalier and irresponsible way people on both left and right now suggest we should pull out and simply let Iraq go to hell. We wonder how those who, rightly, complain about the American mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners, can blithely consign the entire Iraqi population to the likely prospect of a horrific civil war and the brutal dictatorship that would follow. Spare us that kind of "humanitarianism."

Thank goodness the president says he remains committed to victory. Thank goodness there are stalwarts like Senators Joe Biden, Joe Lieberman, and Evan Bayh in the Democratic party who are fighting against that party's growing clamor for withdrawal. But loss of confidence that the war is winnable goes well beyond left-wing Democrats and isolationist Republicans. The Bush administration seems not to recognize how widespread, and how bipartisan, is the view that Iraq is already lost or on the verge of being lost. The administration therefore may not appreciate how close the whole nation is to tipping decisively against the war. In a sense, it doesn't matter whether this popular and elite perception of the situation in Iraq is too simplistic and too pessimistic. The perception, if it lingers, may destroy support for the war before events on the ground have a chance to prove it wrong.

So Iraq could be lost if the Bush administration holds to the view that it can press ahead with its political and military strategy without any dramatic change of course, without taking bold and visible action to reverse the current downward trajectory. The existing Bush administration plan in Iraq is to wait for U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to name an interim Iraqi caretaker government by the end of May that will take power on July 1, and prepare for elections in January 2005. This plan might have been adequate a couple of months ago. But it is inadequate to meet the new challenge.

Among the biggest mistakes made by the Bush administration over the past year has been the failure to move Iraq more rapidly toward elections. It's true that many, inside and outside the administration, have long been clamoring to hand over more responsibility to Iraqis, responsibility above all for doing more of the fighting and dying. But the one thing even many of these friends of Iraq have been unwilling to hand over to Iraqis is the right to choose their own government. This is a mistake.

We do not believe in the present circumstances that the current administration plan moves quickly enough toward providing Iraqis real sovereignty. It is not real sovereignty when a U.N. official tells Iraqis who their next prime minister will be. We strongly doubt that the announcement of a new interim government—three to four weeks from now, to take office almost two months from now—will have sufficient impact on Iraqi public opinion to overcome the images of American soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners. Nor do we believe the present course will give the American people and their representatives sufficient reason to hope that a corner may be turned in the near future. The coming weeks are critical.

We don't claim to have a silver bullet. But we believe one answer to the current crisis would be to move up elections by several months, perhaps to September. The administration could announce very soon that nationwide Iraqi elections will be held on September 30. Brahimi could go ahead and announce his caretaker government, but it would be clear to all that the new government's primary purpose was to preside over the transition to elected government—first by preparing for the elections, with the help of the United States and the international community.

Accelerating the elections would have several virtues: First, it would change the subject. Instead of focusing on their anger at Americans, Iraqis would be compelled to begin focusing on the coming elections, where each and every Iraqi adult will have a chance to participate in shaping the future. Second, with elections coming quickly, those who continued to commit violence in Iraq would be understood to be attacking not only the United States, but also the elections process, and therefore democracy. The insurgents would be antidemocratic rather than anti-American. Sunnis could be told that if they want more power, they should begin organizing for the vote. Those Sunnis who committed violence would be harming the

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Sunni population's chances of fair representation, since violence that disrupts the voting could lead to nullification of the vote in the affected areas. The impending elections would encourage the majority of peaceful Sunnis and Shia to take sides against the guerrillas who seek power through force of arms instead of through the ballot.

Third, with elections pending, American military actions could be seen not just as an effort to suppress rebellious Iraqi movements but as a vital support for the elections process, and for democracy. Americans would be fighting to give Iraqis a chance to vote, soon. Fourth, and not least important, the holding of elections in Iraq within a few months might give Americans here at home greater confidence that things can be turned around in Iraq. Does it make that much difference whether elections are held in January 2005 or September 2004? In normal times, perhaps not. But these are not normal times. In terms of perception and psychology, both in Iraq and in the United States, we believe moving the elections to September can make a very big difference. As for those who rightly point out that the schedule we suggest would make for a hasty and imperfect election process and that much could go wrong, we agree. But even flawed elections in Iraq would contribute to a sense of political progress—of movement toward legitimate self-government—that would give us a chance of improving the situation.

In addition to setting a new date for elections, the administration would have to do a couple of other things. It would have to increase, substantially, the number of troops in Iraq in order to create a more secure environment for elections. Rep. John Murtha has been attacked by Republicans for insisting that we are unlikely to succeed in Iraq without a big increase in the number of troops. These attacks on Murtha are stupid, because he is absolutely right. The Pentagon continues to fiddle while Iraq burns. Everyone in Iraq with whom we talk bemoans the shortage of troops and equipment. It is now impossible to travel safely throughout most of Iraq. This is terrible news, and would be even if we weren't preparing for an election. But if elections are announced, the Pentagon could be forced to overcome its arrogant stubbornness and beef up the force.

Finally, the administration should use the new date for elections as an opportunity to make one more run at Europe and the international community for support. It could challenge the French and Germans to send troops to Iraq not to aid our occupation but to support elections. And aside from troops, Europeans could provide vital money and technical assistance to the elections process, which must be managed with care. We believe it would be hard for Europeans to say no when asked to support a more rapid electoral process in Iraq. The Bush administration, therefore, might be able to demonstrate to the American people that it was acting with greater success to bring the international community in to help. That too would help reverse the gloom and doom here at home.

As we say, this proposal is not a cure-all. It carries its own risks as well as benefits. If someone has a better idea, we're happy to hear it. But if the administration does not take dramatic action now, it may be unable to avoid failure.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

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A Few Bad Men

The military's top officers and civilians are constrained by strictures against "unlawful command influence" from expressing their true feelings about the members of the 372nd Military Police Company who face charges of conspiracy, dereliction of duty, cruelty and maltreatment, indecent acts, and assault for their all-too-well-documented sadistic abuse of Iraqi detainees in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison. Not operating under such constraints ourselves, we admit to looking forward to a fair trial of the accused followed by their harsh punishment. They have endangered any American unlucky enough to find himself at the mercy of our enemies in the war on terror. They have impeded our progress in that war. More fundamentally, they traduced their mission, betrayed their fellow soldiers, and disgraced their country. Anyone up or down the chain of command who was criminally complicit should be prosecuted, too.

That said, we were made uneasy by the indiscriminate orgy of outrage in Washington last week. For all the talk of the hysteria and paranoia and hatred those unspeakable photographs are going to unleash in the Arab world, it was here that they seemed to have their most potent effect. Pulses quickened among everyone who has it in for President Bush and the American effort in Iraq. We watched the Senate Armed Services Committee's grilling of Donald Rumsfeld gavel to gavel on Friday and could not readily distinguish between senators' anger over the crimes at Abu Ghraib and their rage that Rumsfeld had not given them a heads-up when CBS was about to broadcast the photographs. It is undoubtedly true that this was a breach of courtesy, as one senator put it. We wouldn't blame the senators in the slightest if they decided to drop Rumsfeld from their Christmas card mailing lists. We don't doubt the sincerity of Sen. Carl Levin's "dismay," as he called it, that when Rumsfeld "briefed senators in a classified session last week on events in Iraq, just hours before the story broke on television, you made no reference to the impending revelations."

But outside of Zone 1 on the Washington, D.C., taxicab map, these are trivial lapses. And on this point, our sympathies are entirely with the embattled secretary of defense. No one was left in the dark about the ongoing investigation at Abu Ghraib. It had been public knowledge since January for anyone who cared to know. There was no "coverup"—a word that was on the lips of every other hyperventilating Democratic congressman last week. Gen. Mark Kimmitt publicly announced in Baghdad on March 20 that criminal charges had been filed against six soldiers and that 17 had already been "suspended from their duties until the outcome of the investigations." He described the collapse of good discipline in the unit as a "kind of cancer that you've got to cut out quickly." Nowhere in the record of events made public so far is there a hint that allegations of wrongdoing, once leveled, were ever brushed aside or not taken with utmost seriousness by the military chain of command.

Neither are we sympathetic to the arguments of defense lawyers for the accused, echoed by friendly reporters, who want to point the finger of blame anywhere except at their clients. The prison guards were badly trained, we hear; they thought they were doing what the interrogators/contractors/CIA wanted them to do; they were cogs in a corrupt military machine. We might say something like that if we were being paid to defend these lowlifes. And, yes, there do seem to have been lamentable weaknesses in training and command. But "sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light" is evidence of a lack of humanity, not a lack of training. And consider this lovely detail: The *Washington Post* reports that there is "a new batch of photographs similar to those broadcast a week ago [which include] pictures showing crude simulations of sex among soldiers." Did the CIA encourage them to do *that*, too?

The Bush administration's enemies fantasize that there has been an effort to "suppress" this story. To the contrary, this is probably the least "suppressed" such story in American history. Indeed, we are told there are more horrifying pictures and video to come. There's only one way to drain this poison, and it isn't further breast-beating, from the administration or its foes. Bring on the trials, and the punishment.

—Richard Starr, for the Editors

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Precarious Rumsfeld

Bush expresses confidence in him—for now.

BY FRED BARNES

THE MOST OMINOUS MOMENT for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last week came in an exchange with Republican senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. Near the end of Rumsfeld's appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Graham suggested that "the worst" of the prison abuse scandal "is yet to come" in photos and videos of mistreatment of Iraqi detainees. And Rumsfeld seemed to agree. "There's a lot more pictures and many investigations underway," he said.

Despite this, President Bush insists Rumsfeld will keep his job. Bush took Rumsfeld aside at the White House to chastise him for not informing him of graphic photos and an official report on the scandal. The president intended to leave the Rumsfeld matter at that. But aides leaked word of the "mild rebuke" by Bush to the press, thinking this would make Bush look better. The leak was not ordered (or expected) by the president or his chief political adviser, Karl Rove.

Nonetheless, the leak required a response by Bush the next day when he and Jordanian King Abdullah met with reporters in the Rose Garden. Bush had planned to apologize for the prison abuse but he also had to prop up Rumsfeld. "Secretary Rumsfeld has served our nation well . . . [and] has been been the secretary during two wars," he said. "And he's an important part of my Cabinet and he'll stay in my Cabinet." But isn't there a remote possibility Rumsfeld will have to go? "There is no way," a senior Bush aide said.

But there is a way—in fact, more than one. The first is the Graham scenario of a scandal that gets much worse with more evidence of abuse becoming public. That would increase pressure for Rumsfeld's departure, prompting some Republicans to join the opposition. For now, the cries for Rumsfeld's head are coming from Democrats and the media. The Democratic attacks are actually counterproductive. They make the scandal a political matter, and the effect on Bush is to make him all the more stubborn about keeping Rumsfeld at the Pentagon.

Another way is the Tony Blair scenario. The British prime minister's commitment to the effort in Iraq is critical. Bush is deeply in his debt. Blair has been steadfast but his alliance with Bush is not popular in England. Nonetheless, he declared in an address to Congress last July that Iraq is "a battle worth fighting." Then he offered an eloquent explanation of why America must be involved in Iraq:

> I know it's hard for America, and in some small corner of this vast country, out in Nevada or Idaho, or these places I've never been to but always wanted to go. I know out there there's a guy getting on with his life, perfectly happily, minding his own business, saying to you, the political leaders of this country, "Why me? And why us? And why America?" And the only answer is, "Because destiny put you in this place in history, in this moment in time, and the task is yours to do."

The point is Blair is in a unique position that would allow him to ask Bush to fire Rumsfeld. True, this would be presumptuous and it's highly unlikely. But what if Blair's domestic political problems deepened and he needed some sacrifice by Bush to show he's not the president's poodle and thus to maintain the alliance. It's not inconceivable Rumsfeld could be that sacrifice.

The third way that Rumsfeld might be doomed is a lingering scandal. Bush's apology for the prisoner abuse followed by Rumsfeld's failed to quash it. And though Rumsfeld, in his testimony before the Senate and House last week, was well prepared and contrite, he left too many questions unanswered for the scandal to die quickly. This wasn't entirely Rumsfeld's fault. Some of the questions can only be answered by investigations that aren't completed—questions like what were the precise instructions given to the soldiers to prepare detainees for interrogation and who gave the orders at the prison. When serious questions remain, scandals linger.

If it drags on for weeks, Rumsfeld's trouble will deepen. The president is to travel to France for a celebration of the 60th anniversary of D-Day in June. That is followed by a meeting of the G-8 summit at Sea Island, Georgia, bringing together leaders of the industrial democracies. Bush doesn't want to be peppered with questions about the scandal or Rumsfeld at those events. By then, he needs the scandal to have ebbed.

It probably will have. Certainly it should have. After all, Rumsfeld's only mistakes were ones of process, failing to alert Bush or Congress about the photos of abuse and the existence of a report on the prison wrongdoing. At the White House, it's hoped the president's radio address and his visit to the Pentagon this week will further douse the scandal. "That will dampen it down," a Bush aide said. For Rumsfeld's sake, the aide better be right. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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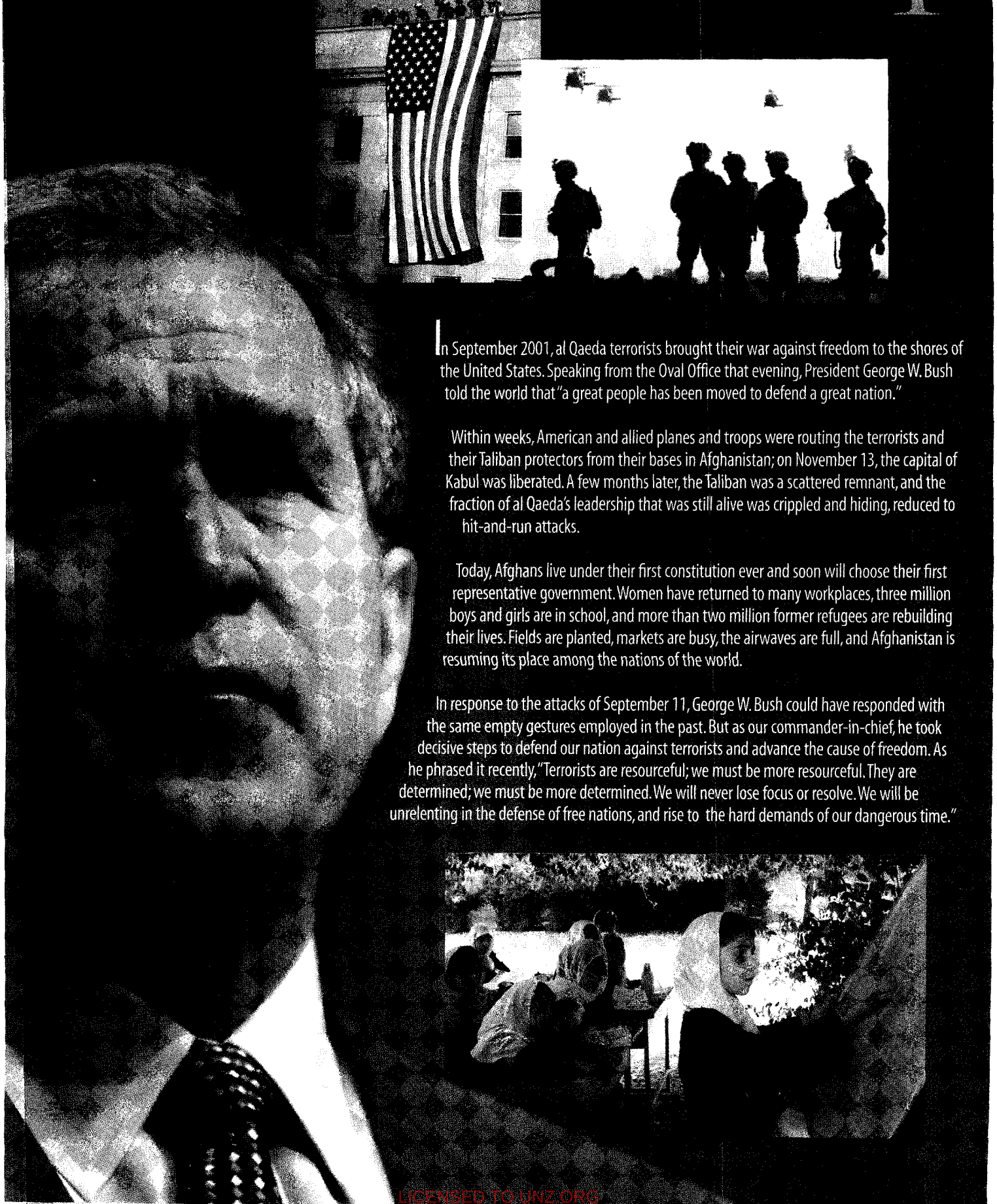
A NATION AT WAR.



In September 2001, al Qaeda terrorists brought their war against freedom to the shores of the United States. Speaking from the Oval Office that evening, President George W. Bush told the world that "a great people has been moved to defend a great nation."

Within weeks, American and allied planes and troops were routing the terrorists and their Taliban protectors from their bases in Afghanistan; on November 13, the capital of Kabul was liberated. A few months later, the Taliban was a scattered remnant, and the fraction of al Qaeda's leadership that was still alive was crippled and hiding, reduced to hit-and-run attacks.

Today, Afghans live under their first constitution ever and soon will choose their first representative government. Women have returned to many workplaces, three million boys and girls are in school, and more than two million former refugees are rebuilding their lives. Fields are planted, markets are busy, the airwaves are full, and Afghanistan is resuming its place among the nations of the world.

In response to the attacks of September 11, George W. Bush could have responded with the same empty gestures employed in the past. But as our commander-in-chief, he took decisive steps to defend our nation against terrorists and advance the cause of freedom. As he phrased it recently, "Terrorists are resourceful; we must be more resourceful. They are determined; we must be more determined. We will never lose focus or resolve. We will be unrelenting in the defense of free nations, and rise to the hard demands of our dangerous time."

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Swift Invasion, Slow Victory

What's gone wrong—and right—in Iraq.

BY TOM DONNELLY

IN THE CRUSH OF IRAQ EVENTS—abuse at Abu Ghraib prison, tough fighting in Falluja and Najaf, calls for Donald Rumsfeld's head on a pike—it's getting harder to see the forest for the trees.

Luckily, there is always Clausewitz to help us focus on the critical issues in war. And war, the Prussian sage reminds us, "does not consist of a single short blow." That pretty much sums up what's going wrong and what's going right in Iraq.

The Bush administration's failure to heed these words is what got us in trouble in the first place. Fascination with the "shock and awe" of modern battle, the wizardry of stealth, precision, global strike, information networks, sensors, technology ad infinitum, blurred the true meaning of "regime change." The three-week march to Baghdad, magnificent as it was, achieved regime removal but not change. The deeper purpose of the war—changing the nature of Iraqi politics—cannot be won by any *blitzkrieg*. This is even more true of the larger struggle to transform the greater Middle East.

We are beginning to grasp that true victory is going to take some time. But we shouldn't forget that we are in the process of winning and can complete the win if, at last, we begin to do the things a long war demands. Political fashion in Washington holds that the war is unwinnable. It's still taboo to talk about cutting and running, but the phrase "cut and shuffle"—whatever that may mean—is gaining currency.

Tom Donnelly is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

This is bipartisan conventional wisdom. Despair so grips the Democratic party that even Rep. John Murtha, a former Marine and long the voice of toughness among House Democrats, uses the term unwinnable when talking about the present course. Realist Republicans are grumbling about the president's hopeless, Wilsonian ideals. "In light of recent events," *National Review* has concluded, "we should downplay expectations. If we leave Iraq in some sort of orderly condition, with some sort of legitimate non-dictatorial government and a roughly working economy, we will be doing very well."

Vietnam analogies remain the opiate of the chattering classes. They put Sen. Robert Byrd in full Marc-Antony, Caesar's-wounds mode. "Forty years ago, the United States inundated the Vietnam jungles with American soldiers. What we received in turn was 58,000 caskets," Byrd wrote in the *Washington Post*. "Iraq isn't Vietnam," admits *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman. Except, he continues: "Gulf of Tonkin attack, meet nonexistent WMD and links to al Qaeda. 'Hearts and minds,' meet 'welcome us as liberators.' 'Light at the end of the tunnel,' meet 'turned the corner.' Vietnamization, meet the new Iraqi army."

In sum, a year after declaring "mission accomplished" in major combat and after waging a fairly successful counterinsurgency campaign, we still don't understand the war—in Iraq, or Afghanistan, or on terror across the greater Middle East—as well as we should. Perhaps President Bush does, but he has been far too tolerant of his lieutenants, not just in the Pentagon but across the government, who do not share his goals. Both in terms of strategy and structures—especially military strategy and structure—we have yet to solve the puzzle.

To go forward, we must look back. Back to 1979, when the political order in the Middle East began to crumble. The fall of the shah and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, and, most significantly, the seizure of power in Iraq by Saddam Hussein began the slow but inexorable collapse of traditional American policy. In the old way of doing business, the aim was to balance local powers to keep the oil flowing and, during the Cold War, to keep the Soviets out. Since the late '70s, the search for stability has proved elusive and, as the legitimacy of regional regimes has weakened in the eyes of their own people, the balancing act has become more precarious. Since then, the presence of U.S. troops in the region has been steadily on the rise.

The policy of stability was dealt another great blow by the attacks of September 11, 2001, after which Americans began to comprehend the scope of the war on terrorism. A president other than George Bush might have been content to invade only Afghanistan, but it's not clear that a more limited campaign would have saved us from our present troubles. There is no guarantee that our enemies in the region would have been content had our presence been limited to Kabul. Indeed, given the centrality of Afghanistan to the jihadist wing of Islam, it is almost certain that we would be facing tougher resistance there had we not gone on to Iraq. To have focused on Afghanistan and/or the ever-more-intricate global manhunt for Osama bin Laden would have been to relinquish the strategic initiative. Again, given that our purpose is to revolutionize the political status quo in the region, the price of "stability" is a longer, harder slog.

This is a truth that the U.S. policy and strategy-making community has been slow to grasp. The scandal is not, as Bob Woodward and others have

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"revealed," that the administration immediately began planning for the invasion of Iraq after the war in Afghanistan. The Pentagon has been planning for a march to Baghdad since 1991. The real scandal was that the war plan was so at odds with the president's goals.

To be fair, no government bureaucracy has really embraced the idea of remaking the Middle East into an oasis of democracy. Rumsfeld's Pentagon has served the president better than Colin Powell's State Department or George Tenet's CIA. But the mistakes of diplomacy and the mistakes of the intelligence community in estimating Saddam's weapons programs pale in significance to the failure to understand the nature of the war. Moreover, these were mistakes that no military staff college student would make; they violated not only received American doctrine but the most essential tenets of campaign planning.

From the start, the decision to limit the size and capabilities of the invasion force had unintended but predictable consequences. Almost from the start, the attempt to fight a "just in time" war meant that even small surprises—the resistance of the Saddam *fedayeen* and other irregulars, the terrible sandstorm of the last week in March—sapped the strength of a too-small force. In particular, stripping down force units of their usual complements deprived the force of the logistical wherewithal to continue operations past Baghdad. To use a military term of art, the invasion force "culminated" shortly after the statues in Firdos Square came down. That means they weren't ready to go on to other tasks.

To be sure, simply ridding the world of Saddam, Uday, Qusay, and the rest has been no small blessing. Mass murder directed from Baghdad is a thing of the past. Iraq's neighbors no longer fear Saddam's tank armies. And Americans are no longer risking their lives simply to contain the hegemonic ambitions of one of the region's fascists.

It's easy to undervalue the invasion because it was so successful, so swift, and thus so humanely fought. There were many good reasons to fight the war as rapidly as possible. So much of the story of Operation Iraqi Freedom is the story of dogs that did not bark: no wider war, no attacks on Israel, no environmental catastrophe, no humanitarian crisis, no siege of Baghdad. And—saints be praised—no weapons of mass destruction. That Saddam had, for whatever reason, decided to purge his stocks of chemical and nerve agents and put his nuclear program on hold is an unmitigated blessing. We feared these weapons for the best of reasons. He had them in the past. He used them in the past. He still wanted them and had the means to acquire them. It is good to be lucky, but it is no basis for strategy.

The need for speed, however, took precedence over the need for a combat campaign that would set the right conditions for reconstruction. Saddam's power—which he maintained for nearly 30 years, hardly a measure of fragility—drew not only on his own ruthlessness and the perversity of the Baath party, but also on the traditional ties of tribe and clan, as well as the deepest fears of the Iraqi Sunni community. We have yet to cure Iraqi society of its well-learned viciousness, let alone replace the ruthlessness and paranoia with anything better.

To make progress on this front, we need to have really conquered the so-called Sunni Triangle. But this goal was beyond the imagination of the war plan and beyond the abilities of the invasion force. We can only speculate what effect the 4th Infantry Division might have had if the Turks had permitted an attack through northern Iraq. There is no guarantee that there would not have been an insurgency of some sort. Moktada al-Sadr and his Iranian sponsors would still be a problem, jihadists everywhere would still be outraged. But the Sunni heartland certainly did not feel the shock and awe of the invasion, and the problem persists.

For those disappointed that the invasion itself did not produce the

SAYING WHAT THE LAW IS

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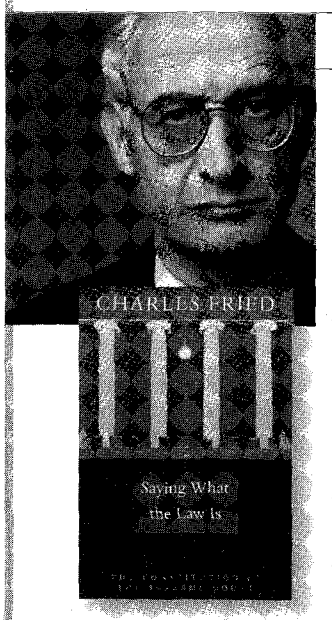
CHARLES FRIED



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anticipated quagmire, the sporadic but constant violence of the past year—especially in Falluja—has offered significant consolation. But by any historical standard, the counterinsurgency campaign has been remarkably successful.

First of all, the rejectionists in Iraq have thus far had little luck in shaking American political resolve (beyond the nervous politicos inside the beltway) to stay the course. It's not that we all share President Bush's clarity on this issue, or that polls don't capture our uncertainty about what to do next. But the Democrats are showing themselves more anti-Bush than antiwar, which is perhaps a better measure of public opinion. John Kerry disagrees with Bush about many aspect of the war, and his plan of "internationalizing" the Iraq mission is pure fantasy, but his argument so far is merely that he knows better than Bush how to win. The Howard Dean moment, and the belief that a world without Saddam is no safer, seems to have passed.

Second, the insurgents have also failed to spark a civil war in Iraq—which, to remember prewar predictions, ought to have been easy to do. The fact remains that, for all our blunders, Iraqis have proved patient enough. Indeed, this has been the real story of the past several weeks, particularly of Najaf and Abu Ghraib. The day after the prison pictures were published, Grand Ayatollah Sistani and his fellow mainstream Shia clerics gave the U.S. military a green light to go after Moktada al-Sadr. And Kurdish and Shia leaders in Iraq—in contrast to the Sunni regimes of the region—have had little to say about Abu Ghraib. They understand, however grimly, that we are their only hope. As long as our will holds, theirs will, too.

Against these two strategically vital successes, the insurgency can only claim to have driven the Spanish, the Hondurans, and perhaps the Thais out of Iraq. Even the United Nations has returned, if only as interlocutor in the form of Lakhdar Brahimi. Certainly Kofi Annan is anxious to change his institution to be relevant in post-9/11 politics.

President Bush has, ironically, been reluctant to seek that same sort of change. The U.S. military—its forces, its plans, its budgets, its weapons programs—remains essentially unchanged from the world of September 10. Nor has there been any fundamental change during the past year, as it has become clear to all that our commitment in Iraq must be open-ended.

Even though there is a pressing need for some more troops in Iraq, there is an even more urgent need to prepare the American people, their government, and their military for longer and larger missions. President Bush's basic strategic insight—that peace and stability in the Middle East depend on political reform and the spread of liberty—is profound. But victory in the so-called "war on terrorism" will be measured less by how rapidly we deploy or how swiftly we fight than how long and how broadly we remain engaged. Clever tactics are no substitute for resolute will. ♦

Ask the Afghans

And they'll tell you they're looking forward to their first free elections. BY CRAIG CHARNEY

WHEN I FLEW into Kabul in early February for the second time in five months, my driver hustled me out of the airport. A car bomb had blown up just outside not long before and he was taking no chances. We left so quickly I scarcely had time to take in the terminal's 10-yard-high portrait of Commandant Massoud, the martyred anti-Taliban guerrilla chief and official hero of today's Afghanistan.

With the Taliban and its allies increasing their pressure, Kabul has become a jittery city, especially for foreigners. Some 700 people have been killed in Afghanistan since August, most of them Afghans, a handful of them foreigners, both civilians and soldiers. Yet while unease has grown in the capital—widely noted in the foreign press—something different and important has been happening in the provinces, much less reported. Many Afghans have come to feel hopeful about their country and look forward to its first free elections, planned for September.

After the Taliban was ousted in 2001, Afghanistan drew hundreds of idealistic young (and not so young) foreigners. It became the latest stop on the Democracy Trail, attracting humanitarian veterans of Cambodia, South Africa, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, along with activists of a new generation. They worked hard, on everything from road-building, constitution-making, child welfare, and girls' education to agriculture, women's rights, the disarming of militias, and plans for elections. They played hard, too.

In fact, for a place where, until recently, music was banned and unmarried lovers were stoned, post-Taliban Kabul was a pretty good place for foreigners to party. My first trip last October included a Halloween bash of 200 expatriates, where rock music blared and I came across guests costumed as everyone from the Sheikh of Araby to Afghanistan's interim president, Hamid Karzai.

Now, though, the party may be over. As attacks by the Taliban and its al Qaeda allies have become increasingly common outside the capital, especially in areas bordering Pakistan

Craig Charney is president of Charney Research, a New York polling firm, which recently conducted a study of public opinion in Afghanistan for an American foundation.

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in the south and east, and occasionally have hit the capital, the expats' lifestyle has become crimped and their mood anxious.

In response, security restrictions have tightened. In Kabul, the office where I worked had taken its initials off the front door and my name off my car. Security rules now bar some aid workers from restaurants, where foreign crowds might tempt attackers. Much of the southeast is off limits to the U.N.'s foreign staff.

One night, I had dinner with a British academic; instead of taking me to a restaurant, he bought take-out. During the meal, he checked in with his agency's security office via walkie-talkie. "He's letting them know he's still alive," his wife said, smiling nervously. Such episodes undoubtedly color the perceptions of foreign reporters and analysts based in Kabul or flying in on brief visits.

One reason for the rise in violence is the elections' approach. If Karzai can win a popular mandate, his legitimacy will be incontestable. No wonder reports from Taliban camps in Pakistan speak of a "spring offensive," and letters are left by night in Afghan villages threatening potential voters. U.S. and Pakistani forces have deployed on the Afghan-Pakistan frontier in a bid to thwart them and hunt al Qaeda leaders thought to be holed up in the region.

Still, for most Afghans, things are better, and calmer, than under the Taliban (or the warlords or the Communists who ruled before them). No matter what the flaws of Karzai's government—and it gets lots of criticism from an outspoken public—Afghans prefer it to those before.

This became evident from a "qualitative study of Afghan opinion" conducted by Charney Research, consisting of 32 in-depth, open-ended interviews with ordinary Afghans, intended to offer a window on the views of the nascent electorate.

We sent pairs of trained Afghan interviewers, a man and a woman in each, on their own to 16 spots around the country, urban and rural. They went where foreign reporters rarely tread and spent 30 to 60 minutes speaking with average men and women in their own language. The people to be interviewed were chosen by a random selection procedure within specifications designed to produce a demographic mix of all ages, educational levels, and major ethnic groups.

Reuters / Peter Andrews

Voter registration has been slow in the rural areas.

The goal was not a statistically representative sample—there were too few interviews for that—but rather an initial, dipstick measure of political views and thoughts about elections among a mix of typical Afghans. Many of the interview transcripts end with the subjects effusively thanking the interviewers. No outsider had ever asked their opinions before.

Contrary to the impression one might receive from overseas press accounts, most of our interviewees said life in Afghanistan is improving. Asked the classic pollster's question, "Is the country headed in the right direction?" they mostly answered yes.

People we spoke with expressed gratitude for the restoration of peace in most of the country, despite the troubles with the Taliban and quarreling warlords in some parts, as well as for the start of reconstruction. "Here there is no fighting and everything is going in the right direction," said a 42-year-old Pashtun housewife who did not finish primary school. She lives in a village in Kunduz province, in the north of the country. "I think it is moving towards the right direction," said a 32-year-old Turkoman college graduate, who ekes out a living as a petty trader in a village in Balkh province in the northeast and is anxious for his kids to get an education. "The reconstruction work has started, the weapons are being collected, people are interested in work, and interprovincial travel has started."

Of course, the country's much-noted problems—including security, the economy, and the status of women—worried them a lot. Many also criticized Karzai's government as weak and warlord-ridden. Afghans are acutely aware of these issues, which have preoccupied foreign observers, and they don't pull their punches talking about them.

A primary-educated Tajik housewife, 35, in Mazar-i-Sharif in the north, reflected the views of many when she said, "The biggest problems are unemployment and insecurity in the area." In the town of Gardez, two hours south of Kabul, a 20-year-old Pashtun woman in sec-

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ondary school echoed other women we interviewed about women's disadvantages: "First, women are facing the illiteracy problem, then, they have no freedom." In the eastern city of Jalalabad, a 27-year-old Tajik man, a petty trader with primary schooling and three children, complained that the current transitional administration "didn't do anything for the people of Afghanistan yet, because power is still with the gunmen and government cannot do anything."

Nonetheless, most of the people we spoke with were satisfied with Karzai's performance, crediting him with restoring the peace and trying hard. A typical comment: "Karzai made a lot of efforts to bring peace and prosperity in the country and he is a really hardworking man." This was the view of an unschooled 50-year-old Pashtun man who keeps a small shop in the bazaar near a mosque in a village in Paktia province, one of the areas bordering Pakistan where the Taliban have struck.

Moreover, almost all of our interviewees expressed the same desires for their country: They wanted reconstruction and aid, not a return to the past. Even most of the discontented complained that they wanted more help rebuilding and a stronger hand in Kabul—not the foreigners out or the Taliban back.

In fact, even in the Taliban's one-time heartland of Kandahar in the south, the hostility to them was striking. In a village in Kandahar province, when a 34-year-old Pashtun housewife who had not finished primary school was asked what she associated with the Taliban's leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, she replied, "Very bad. Killing and atrocities, there was no period ever like that in Afghanistan's history." A 40-year-old Tajik woman who teaches school in Kandahar city summed up the prevailing view: "I'm unhappy when I hear his name. The people of Afghanistan hate the Taliban."

It is easy for overseas commentators, but not for Afghans, to forget how horrific life in Afghanistan had become by the end of three decades of foreign intervention, war, and misrule. What the relentless foreign commentary on post-Taliban Afghanistan's problems misses is that, although things there are bad today, most Afghans think things are better than yesterday and have begun to feel hope about tomorrow.

Above all, the Afghans we interviewed look forward with excitement to the chance to choose their leaders for the first time ever. The edginess of Kabul-based expatriates contrasts with ordinary citizens' simple determination to vote.

A 55-year-old Tajik man in a village in Herat province in Western Afghanistan, a skilled worker with two children, said, "This election is a great fortune that the people of Afghanistan will enjoy. I will definitely vote!" In the troubled southeast, an illiterate 32-year-old Pashtun housewife and mother of four in a village in Nangarhar province declared, "I am an Afghan and I have the right to vote."

Almost all of our interviewees expressed the same desires: They wanted reconstruction and aid, not a return to the past.

Our interviewers heard such statements over and over. A few women were afraid their husbands would not let them vote, but no one said they did not want to participate.

Indeed, even the oft-quoted statistic that only 15 percent of the country's voters have registered, cited as a sign that the election process is stumbling, actually shows the opposite: Afghans are keen to participate when they can. Until the end of April, registration was open only in the towns—where over two-thirds of the residents flocked to register. (Women's registration has lagged behind men's, a problem election officials are beginning to address with stepped-up efforts to encourage women to vote.)

Because the rural population is large, thinly spread, and hard to reach during Afghanistan's snowy winters, registration in rural areas was not scheduled to begin until May. Since almost 80 percent of Afghans live in the countryside, the reason for the slow start to registration is obvious. Only now is a vast rural registration drive being launched around the country, with 4,600 registration stations provided with administrative and security assistance thanks to foreign funding. (Registration was temporarily suspended in Kandahar province after recent Taliban attacks there, but is expected to resume.)

If anyone was under the illusion that the reconstruction of Afghanistan would be easy, they have surely been disabused of that by now. Clashes with the Taliban, al Qaeda, and warlords, a shattered economy and infrastructure, a weak state, and the lack of women's rights are only a few of the difficult challenges the country faces. But progress has been made.

Afghans already have "voted" at least three times in favor of the change underway in their country. When the Taliban fled, they voted with their beards, cutting them off. They voted again with their feet, when over a million refugees poured back into the country once the mullahs' regime was gone. And they voted with their kids, especially the girls, sending them in massive numbers to reopened schools. Now, Afghans are getting ready to express their views once more, by casting their ballots.

Whatever snags the process may encounter, political life is awakening in Afghanistan. Driving up to the airport on my departure, I saw a reminder of this: A huge portrait of President Karzai now faces Massoud's giant image on the opposite side of the terminal. Kabul may be nervous, but electioneering has begun. ♦

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Free the Iraqi Press!

The last thing they need in Baghdad is another statist media. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

As if the Coalition in Iraq didn't have enough problems, on May 3 most of the staff of *al-Sabah* (Morning), the daily newspaper published with support from the Coalition Provisional Authority, walked out. Ismael Zayer, the paper's editor in chief, announced that a new, independent daily would be established, to be called *al-Sabah al-Jedid* (New Morning). Zayer moved his newsroom to a private house.

The story of *al-Sabah*, which claimed the largest daily circulation of any newspaper in Iraq, dramatizes numerous questions about how the Coalition can help construct a modern, stable, prosperous, and democratic country on the ruins of the Saddam dictatorship. These include: Can Iraqis be trusted to build new institutions? How responsible will Iraqis be in handling media? How much do foreigners need to control? Or can foreign officials simply act as mentors and advisers? Even after the scheduled "Iraqification" on June 30, such questions will remain.

Iraq now has between 100 and 200 newspapers and newsmagazines, depending on who counts. Iraqi media are often dismissed as low in quality; those who want to judge for themselves can read English-language summaries of front-page newspaper stories published daily by the Iraqi Press Monitor, at *iwpr.net/index.pl?-iraq_ipm_index.html*. *Al-Sabah* itself has a website with an English page at *alsabaah.com*. There is also a considerable number of independent English-language websites and blogs coming out of Iraq.

Bloomberg News / Landov / Shawn Baldwin

A newspaper vendor in Baghdad, May 2003

Al-Sabah was created in May 2003, after the liberation of Iraq, with help from the Mare Foundation, a Netherlands NGO with a history of supporting Iraqi journalists in exile (*marefoundation.org*). Zayer himself had worked in Europe as a journalist for years. Early on, *al-Sabah* became one of three media outlets maintained by the CPA under the umbrella of the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), the other two being a television channel, al-Iraqiyah, and a radio network.

The IMN has inherited the staff and facilities of the Ministry of Information of the former Saddam regime. This is not necessarily a bad thing when it comes to personnel. Under many dictators, media and other professionals have had to accept submission, against their will and conscience, in order to survive. Many of these people can be trusted to work as responsible journalists under free conditions. More problematic is the legacy of bureaucratic government control over the media sector.

Al-Sabah and the TV and radio components of the Iraqi Media Network have been administered since mid-January 2004 by the U.S.-based Harris Corporation, a producer of communications equipment. When the contract to run the IMN was put up for bid in the United States, however, it specified that the daily newspaper would be independent within a year, operating free of American subsidy, and on course to be privatized.

Al-Sabah's editor and staff welcomed this. They did not want the paper to remain dependent on American financial aid or to be seen forever as the voice of the Coalition.

In March, a rival newspaper, the daily *al-Mutamar* (The Congress), published by the Iraqi National Congress and considered the mouthpiece for Ahmad Chalabi, criticized *al- Sabah*. *Al-Mutamar* charged that Iraqi government ministries unfairly subsidized *al-Sabah* by giving it exclusive contracts for government advertising. Yet however its competitors viewed it, *al-Sabah* was clearly the dominant paper, printing between 40,000 and 75,000 copies per day and claiming millions of hits on its website. *Al-Sabah* got a new printing press early this year, and was preparing to launch itself into the world of free media. Zayer and his staff were confident of their ability to publish on their own, gaining revenue from advertisers.

Then came bad news. On March 20, the Coalition issued Decree Number 66, signed by Ambassador L. Paul

Stephen Schwartz, a frequent contributor, consulted for a losing bidder on the Iraqi Media Network contract.

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Bremer III, turning the Iraqi Media Network into the Iraqi Public Service Broadcaster, a government media enterprise equivalent to the British Broadcasting Corporation. Zayer and the *al-Sabah* staff professed shock that, under the decree, their newspaper would become a state-owned newspaper, with no prospect of the promised privatization.

Around the same time, the upheaval in Falluja and the confrontations between the Coalition and rebels elsewhere in Iraq were making their work—given their reputation as Coalition apologists—especially dangerous. Three *al-Sabah* workers were killed, five bombings were attempted and prevented at the *al-Sabah* building in the Baghdad district of al-Qahera, and Zayer himself was the target of two murder plots, according to the *Washington Post*. Even printers and drivers working for the paper were threatened.

Before announcing their attempt at independence, *al-Sabah* had published a detailed critique of the media laws set to be imposed in Iraq. Coalition Decree Number 65, also issued March 20, for example, had established an Iraqi Communications and Media Commission. This body would regulate all "telecommunications and telecommunications-related information services," including print media, broadcasting, coverage of elections, mobile telephone services, Internet providers, and Internet cafés. The commission, which would issue licenses for all such enterprises, was to be supported by an array of chairmanships, boards, and panels.

In an editorial, *al-Sabah* described the commission as "bigger and more powerful than Iraq's former Ministry of Information—a state within the state." The newspaper continued, "This Commission will be lawmaker, prosecutor, and judge, technical engineer and moral guardian of the interests of, for example, children (against too much violence on television) and consumers (against fraudulent advertising). . . . [I]n order to be prosecutor and judge, this Commission will need considerable staff to monitor television and radio programs and read the newspapers and weeklies."

With so many print organs already in existence, *al-Sabah*'s editorialists were justified in asking how the commission would find time to keep track of the press. *Al-Sabah* blamed this unwieldy plan on Simon Haselock, the British official named media commissioner by the Coalition in August 2003. The decree making *al-Sabah* part of the Iraqi Public Service Broadcaster also comprised the creation of another whole set of governorships, boards, committees, and related bodies.

In all this, three things should be obvious. The first is that imposing a massive bureaucratic apparatus on top of Iraqi media is a disincentive to independent reporting, entrepreneurial investment, and other essentials for media success in the free market.

The second is that these offices, boards, and other bodies will instantly become centers of political patronage and corruption, regardless of safeguards written into their constitutional documents.

The third and overarching fact is that *this is no way to cure the Iraqis, or any other Arab society, of the statist legacy of the Baathist dictatorship*.

After Ismael Zayer and his staff walked out of the *al-Sabah* offices, the *Washington Post* quoted the man left behind to run the paper for the Coalition—Maher Faisal, a veteran of *al-Jumhuriya* (The Republic), one of Saddam's newspapers—as saying, "These exiles have nothing to teach Iraqis. We can work without them." The message was: Iraqis who learned how media operate in free societies should not try to import their knowledge into the new Iraq.

This gets it precisely backwards. In their editorial criticizing the establishment of the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission, the *al-Sabah* journalists candidly admitted that "in Iraq irresponsible journalism is the norm, not the exception." But the solution to low journalistic standards in the new Iraq is straightforward:

- Iraq needs a free press, in the spirit of the First Amendment.
- Alleged abuses of press freedom should be addressed under a strong libel law along American lines when these abuses involve persons, and by enforcement of public order when it can be shown that media are inciting violence. Incitement to violence is not protected speech in the United States, and should not be in Iraq.
- Newspapers, radio stations, television channels, movie companies, Internet providers, Internet cafés, cell-phone operators, and all other forms of communications enterprise should be encouraged to succeed or fail according to the markets they serve. No subsidies should be required in a country that, almost immediately after its liberation, generated countless new media organs. Iraqis have the resources and the will to create flourishing media.
- The licensing of radio and TV frequencies should be a neutral function administered by a small commission with a minimal staff, with no oversight over content. Broadcast content, like print news, can be regulated through libel law and enforcement of public order. Regarding children's exposure to violence through television, parents can be trusted to make choices.
- Foreign media experts should mentor, advise, and teach. They should not administer media, or write laws governing them, or issue licenses for media employees or investors.
- Iraqi journalists, like free journalists everywhere, should be encouraged to engage in a vigorous discussion among themselves and with the public of what responsible journalism is in a self-governing society. Adherence to high standards should remain a matter of personal and professional commitment, not submission to regulators or the police.

It is often said that the Coalition in Iraq needs a voice of its own. That is true: It should express its views at frequent press conferences open to all reporters. A vigorous, free press is the best possible place to begin the real democratization of Iraq. ♦

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The Oregon Tall Tale

The creepy underside of legal assisted suicide.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

A PAPER PRESENTED at last week's American Psychiatric Association meeting demonstrates once again that the legalization of physician-assisted suicide in Oregon was one of the great public policy con jobs of all time. Earnest euthanasia advocates—generally abetted by a compliant media—spun the myth that assisted suicide would invariably be a rational "choice," strictly regulated by the state, a last resort of dying patients when nothing else could be done to alleviate their suffering. But the more we learn about how doctor-facilitated death is actually being practiced in Oregon, the clearer it becomes that these assurances were false.

Getting access to this information isn't easy. Assisted suicide in Oregon is shielded from meaningful public scrutiny by a shroud of state-imposed secrecy. As a consequence, little is publicly known about the people who have died by swallowing massive overdoses of toxic drugs prescribed by doctors. Indeed, the assisted suicide law was written and later interpreted by state regulators to ensure that the Oregon Health Department is powerless to control the practice of assisted suicide before patients die.

What little oversight the department imposes consists primarily of collecting and publishing data received after the fact. And almost all of the information collected and regurgitated by the state in annual reports comes from the doctors who do the lethal prescribing. In fact, the department is so incurious about the facts and circumstances surrounding assisted suicides, that even when it learns that a lethal prescription request was previously refused, no one calls the nonprescribing doctors to find out why. Nor do the "regulators" usually interview close friends and family members of the patient, who may have information about the patient's circumstances unknown to the prescribing doctor.

Still, here and there, disturbing information about the actual practice of assisted suicide in Oregon has trickled into the public domain. One such case came to light May 6, when psychiatrist N. Gregory Hamilton and his wife Catherine presented their paper to the psychiatrists' meeting, vividly demonstrating the dangers Oregon-style assisted suicide poses to incompetent and vulnerable patients. The Hamiltons are affiliated with Physicians for Compassionate Care, an Oregon-based medical association that supports providing better services to the dying and opposes assisted suicide.

Even though legalized assisted suicide has been practiced for more than six years, this is the first case in Oregon in which the patient's medical records have been made available for review. And a sorry tale they tell: Not only was the patient apparently not terminally ill as defined by Oregon's law when he first received his lethal prescription, but he was allowed to keep his cache of suicide pills despite being diagnosed as hav-

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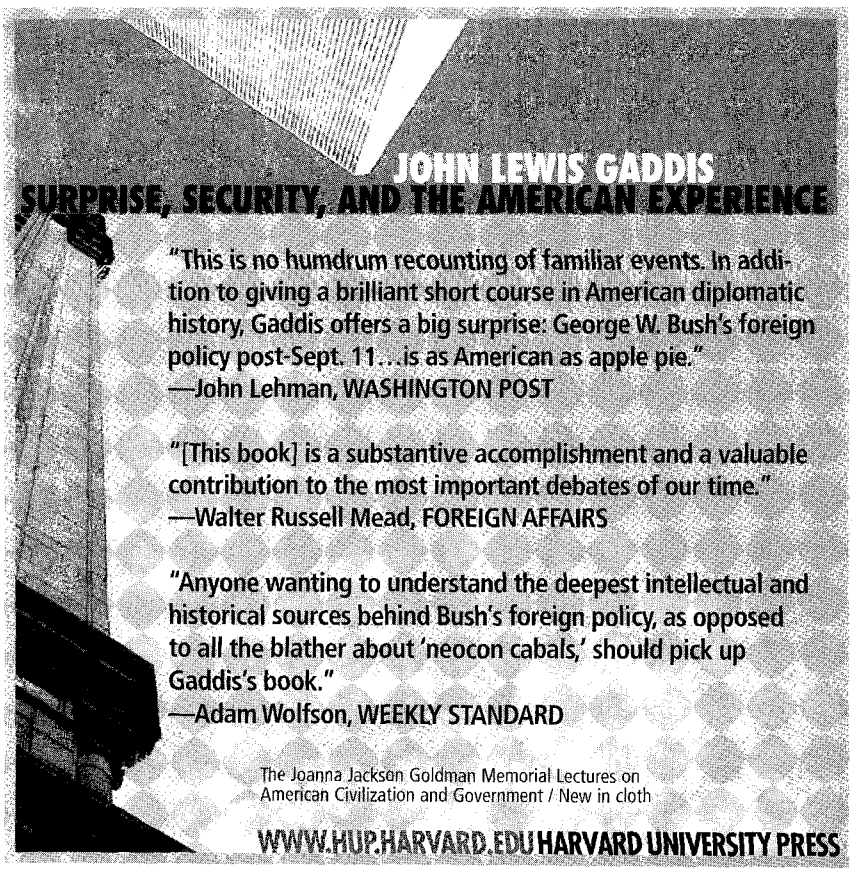

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ing "depressive disorder," "chronic adjustment disorder with depressed mood," "intermittent delirium," and even after being declared mentally incompetent by a court.

Michael P. Freeland was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2000. He received a lethal prescription from Dr. Peter Reagan in early 2001. Reagan is a committed suicide activist; euthanasia advocacy groups often refer suicidal patients to him when the patients' physicians refuse to go along with their requests for suicide drugs. In other words, Reagan regularly takes on patients solely for the purpose of facilitating their suicides.

Freeland, as it happens, died naturally on December 5, 2002. Oregon law requires the patient to be reasonably expected to die within six months before receiving a lethal prescription. But Freeland's death occurred nearly two years after Reagan wrote the lethal prescription. Indeed, Freeland told the Hamiltons that Reagan contacted him after he didn't die in a timely fashion to reissue the prescription to make sure his assisted suicide remained legal!

On January 23, 2002, more than a year after receiving Reagan's poison script, Freeland was admitted to Providence Portland Medical Center for depression with suicidal and possibly homicidal thoughts. A social worker went to Freeland's home and found it "uninhabitable," with "heaps of clutter, rodent feces, ashes extending two feet from the fireplace into the living room, lack of food and heat, etc. Thirty-two firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition were removed by the police." Amazingly, the "lethal medications" that had been prescribed more than a year before were left in the house—presumably in case Freeland wanted to use them.

Freeland was hospitalized for a week and then discharged on January 30. The discharging psychiatrist noted with approval that the guns had been removed, "which resolves the major safety issue," but wrote that Freeland's lethal prescription remained "safely at home." Freeland was permitted to keep the overdose even though the psychiatrist reported he would "remain vulnerable to periods of delirium." In-home care was considered likely to assist with this problem, but a January 24 chart notation noted that Freeman "does have his life-ending medications that he states he may or may not use, so that [in-home care] may or may not be a moot point."

The day after his discharge, the psychiatrist wrote a letter to the court in support of establishing a guardianship for Freeland, writing, "he is susceptible to periods of confusion and impaired judgment." According to the Hamiltons, the psychiatrist concluded that Freeland was unable to handle his own finances and that his cognitive impairments were unlikely to improve. He lived under supervision for a brief time, but was soon home alone with ready access to his suicide drugs.

If death regulations truly protected the vulnerable against abuse in Oregon, the psychiatrist's veto would have ended the matter.

Happily for Freeland, he had called Physicians for Compassionate Care for help, and as he neared his end, he had people surrounding him who were committed to helping him live his life rather than being committed to facilitating his death. Rather than dying alone by assisted suicide, he was instead cared for by the Hamiltons and by his friends—who assured the now imminently dying man "that they valued him and did not want him to kill himself." Freeland was properly treated for depression with medication. He received good pain control, including a morphine pump. Best of all, he was reunited with his estranged daughter and died knowing she loved him and would cherish his memory.

Freeland is not the first patient with a significant mental impairment known to have gained access to a lethal prescription in Oregon. A report in the October 17, 1999 (Portland) *Oregonian* described the assisted suicide of Alzheimer's and cancer patient Kate Cheney, age 85. Cheney received lethal pills from her HMO, Kaiser Permanente Northwest, despite one psychiatrist's reporting that she had lost much of her short-term memory and did not have the "very high capacity required to weigh options about assisted suicide." Worse, the person who seemed most intent on Cheney's suicide wasn't the elderly patient but her daughter. Accordingly, the psychiatrist recommended against writing the lethal prescription.

If death regulations truly protected the vulnerable against abuse in Oregon, the psychiatrist's veto would have ended the matter. But it didn't. While Cheney seemed to accept the psychiatrist's verdict, her daughter went doctor shopping.

Kaiser allowed Cheney to be seen by a psychologist who, like the psychiatrist, found that the elderly woman had significant memory problems. For example, she could not recall when she had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The psychologist also worried about familial pressure, writing that Cheney's decision to die "may be influenced by her family's wishes." Still, despite these reservations, the psychologist determined that Cheney was competent to commit assisted suicide.

The final decision to approve the death was made by a Kaiser HMO ethicist/administrator, Robert Richardson. Dr. Richardson interviewed Cheney, who told him she wanted the poison pills because she feared not being able to attend to her personal hygiene. After the interview, satisfied that she was competent, he approved the lethal prescription. Cheney died of an overdose sometime later, perhaps not coincidental-

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ly, on the very day she returned home from a one-week stay in a nursing home.

Assisted suicide advocates like to point to Oregon's law and declare that legally facilitated death there is well-managed. But the experiences of Michael Freeland and Kate Cheney demonstrate that Oregon's protective guidelines offer scant protection to vulnerable and depressed patients. Moreover, the meager safeguards that do exist evaporate once the lethal prescription has been issued, at which point no doctor is required to ensure that the patient remains competent, no doctor is required to be at the patient's bedside when the overdose is taken, and no one is responsible to ensure that patients are capable of understanding what they are doing when they actually take the lethal dose.

This leaves incompetent and vulnerable patients exposed to the worst potential abuses. Assisted suicide in Oregon isn't compassion: It is abandonment. ♦

The Diversity Kit and Caboodle

The latest in cynical, ideological scholarship.

BY MARK BAUERLEIN

JUST OVER a quarter of a century ago, the *Bakke* decision sparked an intellectual quest: How could proponents of affirmative action justify the use of racial preferences in college admissions *on educational grounds*? Last year, the culmination of that quest was enshrined, fittingly, in another Supreme Court decision. Writing for the majority that upheld the affirmative action program of the University of Michigan law school, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor affirmed racial preferences as a basic American policy. "Effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civic life of our Nation," she declared, "is essential if the dream of one Nation, indivisible, is to be realized." In the schools, O'Connor wrote, diversity is a pedagogical good, as students of different races bring the "unique experience of being a racial minority" to the campus and so promote among students at large a deeper understanding.

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Behind that high-flown social vision, what's more, stands a burgeoning field of social science called "diversity research" (DR). Summoned into being by a long series of court challenges to preference programs, DR comes dressed in the trappings of survey analysis, complete with charts and statistics and all the scholarly paraphernalia of citations and peer-review panels. Since DR exists for the sole purpose of proving that affirmative action lifts all students' knowledge and skills, its findings are marked by an unusual unanimity: All studies reach the same conclusion—that campuses need more diversity, more multiculturalism. As one pro-preference expert witness sums up the wisdom of the field, "Students learn more and think in deeper, more complex ways in a diverse educational environment."

The future of affirmative action rests partly on researchers' continuing ability to show that multiracial classrooms are superior. Rarely has a research agenda gathered so much backing so quickly. Funding comes from the U.S. Department of Education, the Ford Foundation, and universities. While it is difficult to nail down funding totals for the field as a whole, two Ford Foundation grants in 2003 are suggestive: The foundation awarded the Association of American Colleges and Universities $225,000 to show schools how to connect diversity with excellence. And it gave the Civil Rights Project at Harvard $600,000 to build a network of researchers, lawyers, and advocates to bolster affirmative action.

The findings of diversity researchers are disseminated by groups concerned with higher education as well as by an expanding network of specialized institutions, such as the federally funded Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence at the University of California-Santa Cruz. These days, nearly every campus has its office of diversity.

Brown University, for instance, distributes a "Diversity Kit" to high schools and anyone else who's interested—mostly people connected with state departments of education who are involved in the mission of diversifying the classroom, from kindergarten up. Underwritten by the U.S. Department of Education, the kit opens with a warning whose fervor is characteristsic of the genre: the "caution that the content of the kit is emotion-laden." Touching as it does on people's unspoken assumptions and subtle prejudices, DR generally proceeds from a vantage point of moral certainty. It seldom stoops to acknowledge contrary findings. The website of the Office of Diversity Education at the University of Indiana Bloomington exemplifies this complacency. Its homepage, between quotations from Malcolm X, assures visitors that "once the diversity model is described in terms that the various laws and policies intended . . . people are much more willing to open their minds."

But not all minds are so pliable, and diversity researchers must work

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hard to spread the faith. One approach has been to make "diversity classes" a required part of the college curriculum. These courses, whether in social science or literature or art, are intended to raise students' awareness of racial and ethnic minorities. The students who take them also make for handy research subjects. In 1998 at Penn State, for instance, Betsy Palmer monitored 1,000 students in diversity classes for their awareness of racism and involvement in "diversity activities," such as campus events held by gay and lesbian groups. The study (excerpted on the web's Diversity Digest) found that during the semester, "racial and gender attitudes became more tolerant" and "self-exploration" deepened, though affiliation with Greek organizations "negatively influenced tolerance."

In 1999, Mitchell Chang, a UCLA researcher, administered the Modern Racism Scale to students in diversity courses at a public university in the northeast. This test, a set of seven questions used since the 1980s, purports to "read" attitudes the respondents would prefer to conceal. (Item number 3, for example, is: "Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights." Respondents state whether they strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree.) Researchers concluded that "diversity course requirements are good vehicles for shaping students' racial views."

In 2002, the Civil Rights Project at Harvard published a survey of eleventh graders in an integrated Massachusetts school district. Using a Diversity Assessment Questionnaire they had developed, researchers tabulated students' racial attitudes and ambitions. (Sample question: "How comfortable would you be with a work supervisor who was of a different racial or ethnic background than you are?") They found that most kids were content around each other, and 89 percent felt prepared to work with people of different races. One worrisome result surfaced, though: White students expressed less interest than others in mingling with minorities as adults.

Those troublesome whites. . . . In a section of the Harvard study headed "Academic Support," white students reported receiving from teachers and counselors the least encouragement to attend college and the least information about college admissions of any group. Nevertheless, it is a cardinal tenet of diversity thinking that it is whites who benefit most from the preferences given to racial minorities. (Asians rarely figure in the discussions.)

The argument is that "majority students who have previously lacked significant direct exposure to minorities frequently have the most to gain from interaction with individuals of other races," as researcher Jonathan Alger put it in an essay entitled "The Educational Value of Diversity." Specifically, DR starts from the assumption that the white point of view is impoverished because it is not informed by the experience of oppression. Only rarely does DR explore how minority students profit from contact with whites. Indeed, diversity researchers maintain that while whites need interracial contact, blacks need both interracial contact and protective immersion in their own race.

It is a cardinal tenet of diversity thinking that it is whites who benefit most from the preferences given to racial minorities.

One recent study by two professors of education at Stanford University, Anthony Lising Antonio and Kenji Hakuta, shows DR pushing the scrutiny of whites to Orwellian lengths. Researchers recruited 357 white students at Stanford, UCLA, and Maryland and broke them into groups of three. Each trio was assigned a "collaborator," who was either black or white. The subjects composed a short essay on child labor or capital punishment. The collaborator asked students to summarize their views and led a brief discussion. After that, the participants wrote another essay on the same issue. The papers were collected and students wrote a third essay on the other topic. Investigators rated the essays for Integrative Complexity (IC), defined as the capacity to differentiate and integrate two or more perspectives (purportedly a feature of higher thinking). The result: Groups with a black collaborator displayed greater IC in their essays. Researchers concluded that exchange with black interlocutors deepens white students' thinking. Which was of course the goal.

Along the way, however, this sort of intrusive race vigilance flouts the humane premises of civil rights. To single out one race for enlightenment by another race is, some would say, a perversion of liberal education. DR poses as scientific inquiry, and promises educational improvement, but the data actually reveal a good deal less. If students subjected to diversity training acknowledge that their perspectives have, well, diversified, who's to say they are demonstrating a "learning outcome" and not mere conformity?

It should come as no surprise that students respond as desired. Having had speech codes and sensitivity training foisted on them over the years, they mistrust promises of anonymity. They've learned to play the game and move on. Quick to detect which answers will be praised as proof of learning gains, they suspend conscience and provide them. Diversity researchers take the results, package them as science, and parade them in courts of law. But this is an ideological enterprise, at once utopian and cynical, that, regrettably, will continue while money is plentiful and the students go along. ♦

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The Rise and Decline of Joe Wilson

His new book is out, but his "Notoriety Quotient" is on the way down

By Matthew Continetti

New York

On a Thursday they had the book party. It was a simple affair: just family, friends, coworkers, and journalists. They came to Ambassador Joseph Wilson's house, nestled in the ritzy Palisades neighborhood of Northwest Washington, to celebrate the release of his first book, *The Politics of Truth*. One thing Joe Wilson keeps track of is his "Notoriety Quotient," or the amount of attention he receives from the media. And that Thursday it seemed to be on the rise. For the past week *The Politics of Truth* was mentioned in the same breath as Ron Suskind's *The Price of Loyalty* and Richard Clarke's *Against All Enemies*. Like those books, it was said, Wilson's would contain damning charges against the Bush administration.

The media jumped on the story. On Friday the book would be released and Wilson would appear on NBC's *Dateline*. On Sunday he was booked on *Meet the Press*. On Monday, *Larry King Live*. And on Tuesday he was scheduled for his favorite: comedian Jon Stewart's satirical news program, *The Daily Show*.

Then the book tour would begin, with a trip to California ("my fiefdom," he calls it). After California he'd travel to Seattle ("where of course they love me," he says). And after Seattle he'll come back to Washington via Chicago. It's a packed schedule. Wilson says he is looking forward to it.

At the moment, however, three days after the book party, late in the afternoon of Sunday, May 2, Joe Wilson is sitting in a small bistro on New York's Upper East Side, his back to the Madison Avenue traffic, sipping Pellegrino with lime. He won't drink coffee until later this evening, a few moments before he talks with CNN political analyst Jeff Greenfield in front of several hundred people at the nearby 92nd Street Y. He needs to be "on" tonight, after all. He hopes the talk will be a repeat performance of this morning's *Meet the Press*. "I didn't see it," he says. "I just did it. But the response I've gotten is that it went very well."

Wilson is a big man, broad-shouldered, with a mane of perfectly coifed gray hair. He is 54 years old. Also, he is angry. He is angry because someone told journalist Robert Novak that his wife, Valerie Plame, worked under cover for the CIA. Others—including the CIA itself—confirmed this fact, and in July 2003 Novak used it in a column he wrote about Wilson's trip to Africa in February 2002. The CIA had sent Wilson to Niger, in West Africa, to investigate whether Saddam Hussein had ever sought uranium there. The idea behind Novak's column, it seems, was to explain why Wilson, who later turned out to be a vocal critic of the Bush administration's Iraq policy, was sent on the mission in the first place. This is what Novak wrote:

> Wilson never worked for the CIA, but his wife, Valerie Plame, is an agency operative on weapons of mass destruction. Two senior administration officials told me his wife suggested sending Wilson to Niger to investigate the Italian report. The CIA says its counterproliferation officials selected Wilson and asked his wife to contact him.

Everything in the passage above is true. Wilson never worked for the CIA. And his wife was, until her cover was blown, an agency operative on nonproliferation. She still works for the CIA today, but in a different capacity. Two senior officials did tell Novak that Plame suggested her husband for the job. (Wilson, Plame, and CIA spokesmen deny that.) And the CIA says its own people asked Plame to act as a liaison between the Agency and Wilson. In fact, Wilson and Plame admitted as much to *Vanity Fair* reporter Vicky Ward last November. "[Wilson] was not unduly surprised," Ward wrote, "when, one evening in

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early 2002, his wife asked if he'd come in to discuss Niger and uranium—a subject he'd discussed with the CIA before."

The problem is that whoever told Novak about Plame may or may not have committed a federal crime. In 1982 Congress passed, and President Reagan signed, the Intelligence Identities Protection Act, which makes it illegal to reveal the identity of a covert agent who "is serving outside the United States or has within the last five years served outside the United States." Maybe Plame fits that description. Maybe she doesn't. Patrick Fitzgerald, the U.S. attorney in Chicago, is leading a grand jury investigation into the matter. So far the grand jury has issued no indictments.

Speak to Wilson, however, and he tells you he thinks the controversy over his wife's identity has been a distraction. He'd rather talk about other things. Like geopolitics. "I would've loved to have been talking about the catastrophe Iraq has become," he tells me. "After the story leaked," he says, referring to Novak's column, "I quit being Joe Wilson, the last American to meet with Saddam Hussein, and morphed into Mr. Valerie Plame. All people wanted to talk about was the leak and the status of the investigation. I had nothing to offer about that." He pauses. "I did do a couple of things with Wolf, however."

"Wolf" is Wolf Blitzer, the CNN anchor, a man for whom Wilson has great respect. So too "Tim." And "Brokaw." And of course "Ted." In fact, "I have tremendous respect for all of the top national newscasters," he says. "I really do."

What he really doesn't have, on the other hand, is respect for the Bush administration. Or for Novak. The Bushies are "tougher" than anyone who worked for Nixon, he says. The vice president is a "lying son of a bitch." Karl Rove should be "tarred and feathered." And Novak—well, he says, his eyes narrowed, his mouth stretched into a sneer, "I tore Novak a new a—hole."

Wilson's profanity (he tosses f—s and bull—s around like loose change) is one way you can tell that his book was ghostwritten. The language in *The Politics of Truth* is scrubbed of all vulgarity, indeed of all personality. Another way you can tell the book was ghostwritten is that a well-known ghostwriter, Michele Slung, is mentioned in the acknowledgments. Wilson thanks her for her work as his "editor"—one of three "editors" who worked on the book. And still another reason it's obvious Wilson didn't write *The Politics of Truth* is the cavalier way he talks about it. "I don't think [Valerie's] read the whole thing from beginning to end," Wilson told the *American Prospect*'s Tara McKelvey last week. "In fact, I'm not sure I have."

It's probably better that Wilson not read his book, because *The Politics of Truth* is an uneven mishmash of memoir, anti-Bush rant, and "investigative journalism." What Wilson did was take his newfound celebrity and use it as an excuse to rewrite and publish several hours of oral testimony about his foreign service career that he delivered to the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training in January 2001. Thus most of the book recounts Wilson's 23 years in government: from his time as a foreign service officer in Niamey, Niger, to his role as chargé in Baghdad during Operation Desert Shield, and concluding with his job as a member of Clinton's National Security Council. It was a varied career with many accomplishments. All of which Wilson shares with the reader at length. For example, he was indeed the last American official to meet Saddam Hussein (back in 1991) before the dictator was pulled from his spider hole in December 2003. He was the architect of President Clinton's tour of Africa in 1998. And he saved the *New York Times*.

Here's how that story is told in *The Politics of Truth*:

> David Shipley [editor of the *Times* op-ed page] and I introduced ourselves when I stepped off the elevator and he escorted me to his office for a cup of coffee. En route, down a long windowless corridor with offices on either side, doors sporting the names of *Times* writers, we ran into veteran *Times*man Robert Semple. David explained that I was 'the one who wrote the article on what he didn't find in Africa,' and Semple, turning to me, said, 'So you're the one who turned our paper around.'

That was in July 2003. Wilson had recently published an op-ed in the *Times* that told of his trip to Niger and how he found no evidence of uranium sales to Iraq there. Here's Wilson's reaction to Semple:

> The *Times* had been mired in the scandal surrounding Jayson Blair, the fraudulent journalist whose reporting had been questioned by a number of colleagues. The turmoil in the media about the *Times* had diminished in the past several weeks, but I had not imagined that anyone at the paper would attribute their improvement to me or to my piece. For the second time that day, I was struck by the extent of the reaction to me and the article outside the confines of Washington, D.C.

(The first time Wilson was struck by the reaction to his article "outside the confines of Washington, D.C.," incidentally, was when he walked into an editorial meeting at the *Nation* magazine's New York offices and someone suggested the staff give him a "standing ovation.")

Self-congratulation is only one of the themes of *The Politics of Truth*. The other is rumor-mongering. Wilson doesn't know who leaked his wife's CIA identity—no one

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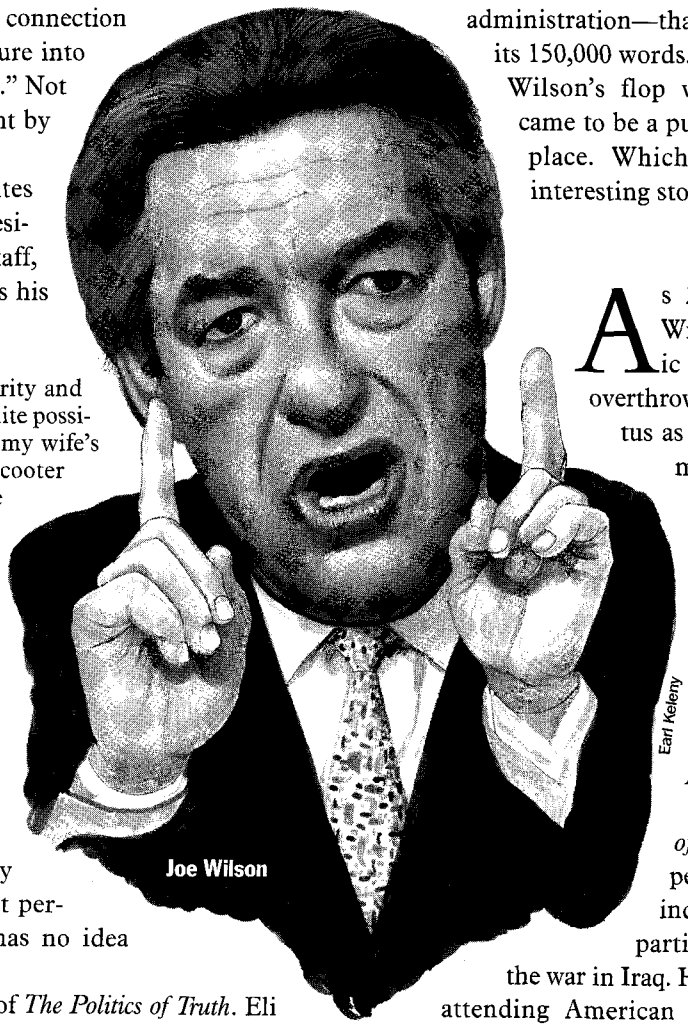
does, in fact, other than the leaker(s) and the leakee(s)—but that doesn't stop him from naming names. "I have sat at the information crossroads," Wilson tells me, as he leans back in his chair, his arms across his chest. What he means is that he talks to a lot of reporters. "Everybody who gets something calls me up to check it out." Unfortunately, "Nobody will tell me who their sources are." Which means that Wilson won't reveal his own.

This causes problems. For example, when Wilson suggests that Elliott Abrams, the National Security Council official, may have leaked Plame's identity to the press, his only proof is that Abrams's name "has most often been repeated to me in connection with the inquiry and disclosure into my background and Valerie's." Not quite the level of proof sought by a grand jury.

And when Wilson writes that I. Lewis Libby, Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, talked with Novak, he frames his accusation this way:

> The man attacking my integrity and reputation—and, I believe, quite possibly the person who exposed my wife's identity—was the same Scooter Libby who, before he came into the new administration, was one of the principal attorneys for Marc Rich, former felon. . . . Libby is a consummate Republican insider who has bounced back and forth between government posts and his international law practice.

So Libby is *quite possibly* the man who exposed Plame's identity. But he may also *quite possibly* not be that person. *Quite possibly* Wilson has no idea what he is talking about.



Joe Wilson

Earl Keleny

Hence the harsh reviews of *The Politics of Truth*. Eli Lake, writing in the *New York Sun*, noted: "Much of this book consists of the same sort of thinly sourced speculation that, nearly a year ago, when it was indulged in by the White House, drove Mr. Wilson to go public on the *New York Times* op-ed page." What's more, "Mr. Wilson was a far better diplomat than he is an investigative reporter." Michiko Kakutani, the *New York Times*'s chief book critic, wrote:

> In the end the tabloidlike subtitle of the book, "Inside the Lies that Led to War and Betrayed My Wife's C.I.A. Identity," underscores the trouble with this volume: its problematic conflation of the most substantive of policy issues with personal grievance and Mr. Wilson's efforts to turn one powerful moment, in which he stood up and challenged the administration's selling of the war and its use of intelligence, into a long, self-dramatizing pat on the back.

Ouch.

So it's possible—in fact, quite likely—that Joe Wilson will remember the publication of *The Politics of Truth* as the zenith of his "Notoriety Quotient." It's possible he'll be remembered more for what his book did *not* contain—any substantive charges against the Bush administration—than for the actual content of its 150,000 words. And it's also possible that Wilson's flop will overshadow how he came to be a published author in the first place. Which is unfortunate. It's an interesting story.

As 2002 bled into 2003, Joe Wilson became an active critic of the impending war to overthrow the Iraqi regime. His status as the last American government official to meet with Saddam Hussein gave him cachet among television producers. So he appeared on cable talk shows. He attended plenary sessions and public debates. He wrote an op-ed for the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Passages in *The Politics of Truth* dealing with this period show Wilson eager—indeed, almost desperate—to participate in the debate over the war in Iraq. He writes unendingly about attending American Turkish Council symposiums and meetings of the Alliance for American Leadership. He catalogues each appearance on *Paula Zahn*, on *Hannity & Colmes*, on *Buchanan and Press*. An interview on *Nightline* is worth several pages. The story of how he emailed his *Mercury News* op-ed to General Scowcroft and former President George H.W. Bush takes up several more.

Wilson's antiwar stance won him new friends. Among them was David Corn, the *Nation*'s Washington correspondent. Wilson met Corn in an unlikely lefty hangout:

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the greenroom of the Fox News Channel's Washington studios. In March 2003, Wilson, at Corn's invitation, penned an article for the *Nation* entitled "Republic or Empire?" It was a rhetorical question. Wilson wrote that "the underlying objective of this war is the imposition of a Pax Americana on the region and the installation of vassal regimes that will control restive populations." President Bush's talk about bringing democracy to the Middle East? Hogwash. "The new imperialists will not rest until governments that ape our worldview are implanted throughout the region."

The *Nation* article was a big success. It "led to a further series of appearances," Wilson writes, on "more substantive news programs," like—and he's serious—"*NOW with Bill Moyers*."

Also in March 2003, it so happens, the International Atomic Energy Agency determined that the documents reporting Niger's sale of uranium to Iraq were forgeries. This revelation threw into question 16 words of President Bush's 2003 State of the Union address: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

Wilson was outraged. He knew all along that there had never been any sale of uranium. A year earlier his friends in Niger had told him so. But the president's speechwriters had used the British intelligence report anyway. So Wilson did what came naturally. He got himself booked on television. "I think it's safe to say that the U.S. government should have or did know that this report was a fake," he told a CNN anchor on Saturday, March 8.

He talked about his Niger trip with reporters, provided they used the information on background. In a May 6, 2003, column by Nicholas D. Kristof, for example, Wilson is identified as "a person involved in the Niger caper." In a June 12, 2003, *Washington Post* piece by Walter Pincus, he is identified as a "former government official." And in a June 30 *New Republic* cover story, he is a "prominent diplomat."

And yet the administration still would not listen. In a June 8, 2003, appearance on *Meet the Press*, Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, said only that "maybe someone knew down in the bowels of the agency," that the Italian documents could be forgeries, "but no one in our circles." Wilson thinks differently. "That was a lie," he writes in his book. "I knew it. She had to have known it as well."

But the fact is that Wilson didn't know it. By his own account, he never saw the Italian documents before, during, or after his trip to Niger. Those documents were not determined to be forgeries until well after his trip. And the CIA felt his trip to Niger was inconclusive. No wonder senior officials like Tenet, Rice, and Cheney deny being informed of it.

Wilson's *Times* op-ed appeared on Sunday, July 6. That morning he was on *Meet the Press*. The next day the White House, after much internal debate, conceded that the president should not have uttered those 16 words about Iraq and African uranium. A week later Robert Novak's column appeared. Valerie Plame's identity was no longer a secret.

In August, Wilson got his book deal.

"I hope there will be a movie," Joe Wilson says. "A movie would provide another vehicle to get the message out." Over the last year Wilson has met many movie people. He and Valerie have dined with Warren Beatty and Annette Bening, for example. He's become friends with Norman Lear. And he is from California. So he knows something about Hollywood.

Who would play you and Valerie? I ask. Warren and Annette?

Wilson laughs. He shakes his head no. "When we did the first Gulf War," he says, "we used to talk about a movie, and I always thought it would be Willem Dafoe." Someone else had another idea: "A friend suggested John Belushi, if he were still alive. John Belushi in his samurai mode. Yeah." He pauses. "There's lot of good stories in there."

Of course, a movie would interfere with Wilson's many obligations. There's his family, for one thing. There's his book tour. And there's also his involvement in the Kerry campaign.

Wilson is a Kerry guy. The campaign approached him in spring 2003. They asked if he'd like to sit on Kerry's foreign policy committee. He agreed. He had done the same thing for Al Gore in the 2000 campaign. In 2000 he'd have a brown bag lunch once a month with friends and talk about eradicating global poverty. The work is pro bono.

Recently he's become a more visible campaign surrogate. "After my Notoriety Quotient went up," he tells me, "I made a conscious decision to offer my services." The campaign was delighted, he says. He formally endorsed Kerry in a conference call with reporters in October 2003. He endorsed Kerry, Wilson told the media, because he and the candidate shared a "commonality of experience" standing up to their government. The difference was that Wilson stood up "at the end of a long and distinguished career" and Kerry stood up when he was only 27.

But he wants to be sure that people don't mistake him for the candidate. He didn't morph into Kerry, he says. And there's a reason why. "Because in my own life I'm

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something of a lightning rod and rather provocative." So he can't be "constrained by Kerry's talking points." After all, he isn't running for office.

But Kerry is. And suppose he wins. And suppose, further, that Kerry wins in part because Patrick Fitzgerald's grand jury determines senior Bush administration officials damaged national security when they leaked the identity of a CIA operative to the press. Wouldn't Kerry offer Joe Wilson a job in his administration? And wouldn't Joe Wilson accept?

Not necessarily. "First of all, it's a big cut in pay." And government workers have long hours. And he's "already been ambassador." The job would have to be important. "If there were a specific match between my skill set, my experience, and my international credibility," well, then he "would accept it."

But that's something he'll have to deal with in November. Right now Wilson wants to prepare for tonight's talk at the 92nd Street Y. He puts his blazer over his black T-shirt and shakes my hand. Then he heads out into the gray daylight. He has books to sell. His Notoriety Quotient won't be this high forever. ♦

All Hat and No Cattle

Why, despite everything, Bush should win

By Irwin M. Stelzer

"We won," an Iraqi militiaman in Falluja crowed to reporters, "We didn't want the Americans to enter the city and we succeeded." The Iraqis there have created a no-go zone every bit as effective as the old no-fly zone imposed by America. Better still from the locals' point of view, a few hundred "thugs," to use the president's term, were gloating as American Marines loaded their gear onto trucks to prepare for their retreat from the city. Best of all, Major General Jassim Mohammed Saleh, late of Saddam's Republican Guard and a Saddam-look-alike, rode triumphantly through town on April 30 to cheers. Whether he announced, "Mission accomplished" is not recorded.

That was too much for the Bush administration. So after handing the Iraqi militants and foreign terrorists a public relations victory, the administration announced that General Mohammed Latif, an allegedly anti-Saddam, Iraqi intelligence officer, is in, and Saleh is out. Well, not really out: Saleh will command one of the battalions of the new security force, to the consternation of the Shiites, who remember his role in crushing their 1991 uprising against Saddam. And the Marines, who had already dismantled many of their positions, were told to hang around should the Fallujans refuse to accept the Baghdad-based Latif. Given all of this confusion, it is little wonder that some observers say Saddam sits comfortably in prison, penning notes to relatives and awaiting an eventual return to power, which is just what happened the last time he was thrown into prison by a legitimate Iraqi government. One high level administration official tells me that the to-ing and fro-ing is due to a military chain of command that is in disarray, and to a breakdown of civilian control over the military.

All of this despite George W. Bush's repeated pledge not to allow a few thugs and remnants of the old regime to recapture Falluja. They will be killed or captured, he promised, as would the radical cleric Moktada al-Sadr, who at last report had been neither, but had settled comfortably into a mosque in Najaf, protected by his militia, and in no fear that Bush's threats would result in any attempt to dislodge him.

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As if these reports from Iraq were not disturbing enough, it is beginning to occur to many of the president's supporters that the Falluja climb-down is just the latest in a series of examples of what the president's Texas friends would call "all hat and no cattle"—an epithet said to have been applied by then-governor Ann Richards to Bush in an effort to classify him as a pretend cowboy who dresses and talks the part, but is pretending to be what he isn't. In New York and Vegas, the phrase is "four flusher," to denote a poker player holding a worthless hand, one card shy of a powerful flush, but bluffing in the hope that opponents will mistake his smirk for strength. In Chicago, a big-talk-no-substance guy flashes what is called a "Chicago roll," a large wad of single dollars around which a $100 bill is wrapped.

Start with the budget. The president has railed against those wasteful spenders in Congress, while presiding over the largest expansion of the welfare state since the glory days of Lyndon Johnson. Nonmilitary, non-homeland-security expenditures have skyrocketed, and are headed higher. The prescription drug program alone is likely to end up claiming 2 percent of GDP, a price considered by Karl Rove a bargain if it purchases Florida's key electoral votes. Indeed, were it not for obstructionist Democrats in the Senate, the flood of red ink would be even greater: The president can't get the Senate to pass his multibillion dollar energy bill that anyone who knows anything about energy markets says will do nothing to reduce our reliance on oil imported from the Bush family friends in Saudi Arabia.

Then we have the fiscal situation. The president quite properly nodded to the memory of John Maynard Keynes, and persuaded Congress to cut taxes so as to stimulate the economy and reduce the severity and length of the recession he inherited from the Clinton administration. But that was then and this is now. The economy is booming, growing at a rate of about 5 percent. The housing market is moving from strength to strength, the manufacturing sector is experiencing its fastest growth in five years, the job market is recovering, consumer confidence is on the rise, Wall Street is again showing big profits and paying outsized bonuses, smiles are returning to the faces of Silicon Valley options-holders, and pricing power is returning to boardrooms.

The tax cuts have done their work. But rather than turn to the problem created by a budget deficit that is approaching an unsustainable 5 percent of GDP, and this before the baby boom generation has begun to claim its Social Security benefits, Bush continues to increase spending and press for still more tax cuts. True, he occasionally threatens to rein in spending by vetoing Congress's most outrageous spending bills, but all the while the cap has remained firmly screwed onto his veto pen. The time is long past when anyone believed that the tax cuts would be self-financing, or had any hopes that the president's proposed budget had any chance of being adopted. Unless the president has signed on to the theory that deficits don't matter, his talk about cutting the deficit in half is nothing more than that—the talk of a man with a large hat and a very small herd.

Which brings us back to Iraq, and the question of whether resolute rhetoric can carry the day in the war on terror. It turns out that a few generals were right, and that the Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz duo was wrong about the number of troops needed to eliminate resistance in Iraq so that reconstruction might proceed. This magazine has long argued that the military needs more money and more troops. No one any longer denies that is the case. For one thing, there are not enough boots on the ground in Iraq, where we can field no more than 20,000 fighters at any one time. For another, after scraping up soldiers from around the world and from behind desks, the Defense Department has left us vulnerable to the lunatics who run North Korea, and to any other regime that, sensing our lack of resolve in Iraq, decides that now is the time to strike against American interests. That very much includes China, should it decide to assert its title to Taiwan while it believes our military is too thinly spread around the world to intervene.

The army, which had 18 active-duty divisions (about 700,000 troops) in 1991, now has only 10 divisions (and about 490,000 troops). Which puts a heavy burden on the National Guard and Army reserve units, consisting of dedicated but less well-trained men and women, many of whom never expected to do prolonged service overseas.

There is no cheap route to victory in the war on terror, which is, after all, affordable by our $12 trillion economy. But the president seems intent on accomplishing the incompatible tasks of persuading us that we are in a war for the survival of our values and way of life, while at the same time doling out tax refunds to keep us happily in the malls, resisting measures to reduce our reliance on Middle Eastern oil lest higher-cost gasoline crimp our summer driving vacations, and promising to take us to Mars. No pain, lots of gain—good for a reelection campaign, but not exactly in the national interest.

It is not only a question of being willing to spend what it takes to win this war. The president succeeded in getting Congress to authorize the expenditure of some $18.4 billion on reconstructing Iraq. But he can't even get his bureaucrats to spend that money. A full year after major combat operations in Iraq have ended, less than 5 percent of that money has been spent. Bush

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seems to have surrendered control of the pace of reconstruction to form-fillers, drafters of requests for proposals, auditors who have no sense of urgency, and a host of folks who seem to care not at all that Baghdad will swelter through the summer with only erratic supplies of electricity. While the bureaucrats are dotting every *i* and crossing every *t*, the reconstruction program languishes. This is, after all, George W. Bush's government, and it is difficult to believe that a single, jobs-on-the-line meeting of the relevant departments, in the Oval Office, wouldn't shake the money tree.

Fortunately for the president, he remains our best bet to lead us to victory in the war, and to prosperity in the future. John Kerry is as eager to call it quits in Iraq as is Bush, the main difference being that the Democratic candidate would have our troops hand over their responsibilities to blue-helmet U.N. peacekeepers with an unblemished record of failure, while Bush would hand off power to some version of a sovereign Iraqi government cobbled together by the U.N.'s Israel-hating Lakhdar Brahimi, and at least hang around long enough to restore some semblance of order to the country.

Getty / Manny Ceneta

Give Bush the edge on this one, especially since Kerry's conceit that he can persuade a Franco-German-dominated Security Council to ride to the rescue is about as likely to be realized as the president's plan to cut the budget deficit. And Kerry's long history of opposing increases in military spending, and his commitment to the left of his party to step up spending on domestic entitlement programs, suggests that he is even more likely than the president to look for victory on the cheap. Besides, Kerry has said that every fire engine we put in Iraq, and every school we refurbish there, comes at the expense of an American city. Which is why he voted against the $18 billion appropriation right after he voted for it. Bush, at least, recognizes that it is not in America's interest to leave a ravished Iraq in our wake; Kerry either doesn't see that, or is so beholden to his Come-Home-America constituency that he has no choice but to ignore the needs of Iraq.

Both men will have to do something about the budget deficit. Kerry proposes to raise some $850 billion over 10 years by increasing taxes on families earning over $200,000 per year, but to spend it on expanding health care coverage rather than on deficit reduction. Bush proposes to spend that $850 billion on more tax cuts. As far as the red ink is concerned, this is much of a muchness, although tax cuts generally have an efficiency edge over more government spending. What can be said in the president's favor is that, if reelected, and relieved of the necessity of ever again seeking voters' approval, he is in a better position than Kerry to fight for the reforms needed to keep the Social Security and Medicaid/Medicare systems solvent, and to begin the long slog towards fundamental tax reform (those reforms are already on Bush's drawing board).

And while we are thinking about economic policy, it would be well to ask ourselves which candidate is more likely to introduce environmental regulations the costs of which exceed their benefits, which is more likely to appoint an EPA administrator who is insensitive to the trade-off between jobs and environmental enhancement, and which is more likely to satisfy trade union demands for protectionist measures and workplace rules of the sort that have brought European economies to their knees. The name Kerry comes up every time.

Not exactly inspiring reasons to fight for the reelection of the president, but reasons of sufficient weight to hope that Kerry continues his feckless wandering about the country in search of a message other than "I want to add 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to my portfolio of homes." ♦

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A New York slum in the early 1900s. All photos: CORBIS.

America in the Middle

Michael Barone seeks a balance By Noemie Emery

Goldilocks, you'll remember, was in search of porridge that was neither too hot nor too cold, a chair that was neither too big nor too small, and a mattress that was neither too hard nor too soft. Now the celebrated political writer Michael Barone has set off in search of the right social order—and, like Goldilocks, he thinks it comes somewhere in the middle, with a government that saves people from undeserved social disaster, while preserving the will to achieve.

Barone's *Hard America / Soft America: Competition vs. Coddling* examines the mean between hard and soft cultures, risk and security in economic decisions, and accountability and indulgence in the culture wars. Hard America values risk, innovation, effort, and enterprise. Soft America values security and equality. Hard America is ruled by the market, while Soft America is directed by government planning. Hard America creates wealth; Soft America reassigns it. Hard America causes undeserved suffering by making no distinction between poverty caused by sickness and poverty caused by laziness. Soft America causes its own suffering by making no distinctions between poverty caused by bad luck and poverty caused by bad habits.

America at the start of the twentieth century was creative, assertive, productive—and very hard. For those on the short end, it could be unforgiving. "At eighteen you were on your own," as Barone writes. "Employers could dismiss you for any reason—the death of a breadwinner was a disaster—the contrast between rich and poor was stark." The country was booming, but the slums and sweatshops were enough to make a progressive of Theodore Roosevelt and create the first age of reform. Thirty years later, the stock market crashed, bringing to power Theodore's fifth cousin Franklin. With him came a raft of security measures to cushion the edges and dangers of life: Social Security, retirement funds, monthly payments to single women with children (assumed to be widows), and a series of efforts to soften the workplace.

Hard America / Soft America
Competition vs. Coddling
by Michael Barone
Crown Forum, 192 pp., $22

After World War II, measures such as the G.I. Bill of Rights and the Federal Housing Administration extended the benefits of higher education and home ownership to millions of people. These programs, Barone says, changed the country from one in which "most people did not graduate from high school to one in which most people attended college; from a nation in which most people rented housing to one in which most people owned their own homes." It was very much a kinder and gentler America, if one that was not wholly softened: Veterans had to have earned their opportunities through prior service and had courses to pass and mortgage payments to meet for their benefits. But there was a safety net, of sorts, and a helping hand from the government, and a state of mind that put a great stress on security.

In his analysis of this history, Barone begins with Theodore Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie*, in which a girl is driven to sin on the mean streets of Chicago, and he ends with Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, a novel of cor-

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Above: A 1980s housing project in the Bronx. Below: Stuyvesant Town in 1951.

porate politics, in which a young veteran trades off the fast track and promotions and money for a less pressured, more leisurely life. "America at midcentury was a far Softer country than it had been," Barone notes. "Security, a word seldom heard and a concept that seemed unrealistic in 1900, became a watchword. The New Deal gave Americans Social Security, protection against the hard threat of economic disaster, and the Softening in many other spheres likewise aimed to protect Americans against hard realities—who wanted to return to the Chicago of *Sister Carrie* when you could live in the Connecticut suburbs of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*?"

Softened already, the culture would soon become softer, not always through deliberately chosen means. The country that emerged from the Roosevelt tenure was what Barone calls a "Big Unit" culture, made up of giant and cumbersome parts. "While Big Business was the dominating force, it was disciplined not by the Hard market but by the Soft countervailing power of Big Government and Big Labor," Barone insists. "The Big Unit economy was inherently soft. In time, these institutions became sclerotic and sluggish, unable to meet new competition."

To explain what befell the industrial sector, Barone cites John Updike's 1979 novel *Rabbit Is Rich*. Gas prices are rising, a shortage mentality has a grip on the nation, and Rabbit is selling Japanese cars. "If you ask me, Detroit's let us all down, 200 million of us," he says to some customers. "I'd much rather handle native American cars but between the three of us they're junk. They're cardboard. They're pretend."

To evoke what occurred on the cultural level, Barone invokes Saul Bellow's 1970 *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, in which Artur Sammler has survived the Holocaust in Europe—only to find a life almost as frightening in 1960s New York. Five years into Great Society politics, with an administration that equated police work with oppression and encouraged people to go on to welfare and stay there, the city was sunk in a mire of crime and dysfunction, where doors were secured by multiple locks, muggings were frequent, and nothing at all seemed to work. On the Number 5 bus, Sammler sees a thief lifting purses and wallets, tries to report it from a broken pay phone in a booth reeking of urine, and finds the police unimpressed.

"Welfare dependency and crime built on each other," Barone writes. "We tried to produce more for the poor and produced more poor. We tried to remove the barriers—and inadvertently built a trap." As in the Hard America of the turn of the century, the slums were filling up with miserable people. If a hard culture was prone to its signal dysfunctions, a soft one also had its signature weaknesses, which were proving themselves just as destructive.

To make things worse, a therapeutic approach to foreign relations led to a traumatic pullout from Vietnam, a make-nice approach to the Soviet Union, and a hostage crisis in Iran. By the end of the 1970s, America was scraping rock bottom, its economy shaky, its culture in tatters, its confidence shot. Near the close of the decade, Jimmy Carter, the sultan of soft, said the one memorable thing of his tenure when he declared that "malaise" had seized hold of the country. He was right.

Around 1930, Hard America ran into a ditch under Herbert Hoover, who had no idea what was happening. Around 1979, Soft America ran into the ditch on the other side of the road, under a leader just as clueless and inept, and the nation once more was pulled back just in time. Crucial to this would be two key elections: 1980, in which the well-meaning and inept Jimmy Carter was ousted by Reagan; and 1993, when Rudy Giuliani beat the well-meaning and inept David Dinkins to become mayor of New York.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, such reform governors as Tommy Thompson, Evan Bayh, and John Engler slashed welfare rolls while nudging the

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underemployed into self-reliance. As they once soared together, crime and welfare statistics now tumbled in unison: Peaking in 1993 at 14.2 million, federal welfare rolls had been cut in half six years later, and would fall to 5.4 million by 2001. Meanwhile, the economy had started to right itself: The softer Big Units continued to flounder, but the growth came from millions of low-level start-ups and new giants—Microsoft, Wal-Mart, and Federal Express—which were started on a shoestring by people outside the establishment and thrived on the Hard virtues of innovation and risk.

Perhaps the signal event of this counterreaction was the passage in 1996 of the federal welfare reform act, signed in an election year by a Democratic president who had earlier vetoed it twice. The key note in this act was the placement of a time limit on benefits, a statement that people had a right to assistance in times of great trouble, but not to a lifetime on taxpayers' money: a blow to the concept of endless entitlement at the core of the Soft way of life. "By the beginning of the twenty-first century, large parts of America had become much Harder," Barone notes with approval. "Will the Hardening of America continue? Or will we move toward a Softer America as the twenty-first century goes on?"

Probably both, as the struggle for balance continues. Meanwhile, in *Hard America / Soft America*, Barone has given us a fascinating way to look at the past and the present. With the excesses of softness still fresh in memory, Barone thinks the system could use more hardening, especially in the area that seems most resistant: education and the public schools. But the problem is really in striking a balance that gets people to strive without making them desperate—that gives them support without sapping their will.

Too hot or too cold, and we can't eat the porridge; too firm or too soft, and we can't sleep in comfort. Extremes in either direction, Barone insists, are dangerous and end in the same place—slums filled with unhappy and desperate people, with too much or too little to do. ♦

Synagogue and State

The Jews in America—then and now.

BY BENJAMIN BALINT

What happens to a minority faith, well acquainted with governmental persecution, when it suddenly finds itself transplanted to a new country that offers unprecedented freedom from old constraints? In his comprehensive survey of Judaism in America, Jonathan D. Sarna, a professor at Brandeis University, offers an impressively detailed reply.

American Judaism
A History
by Jonathan D. Sarna
Yale University Press, 490 pp., $35

As Sarna tells the story in *American Judaism: A History*, Jews in this country have faced a paradox ever since the first Sephardic refugees from the Inquisition established a merchant community in New Amsterdam in 1654. The values of self-determination and autonomy, learned from American Protestantism, allowed Judaism in the United States to flourish in some ways even as it disintegrated in others. Jews felt confident that Judaism and Americanism were compatible—some early arrivals considering their new home a "second Jerusalem"—but they were also beset by the fear, Sarna writes, "that the melting pot would subsume them."

The pot, of course, was partially of their own making, since even in those first days, the mere presence of Jews helped to expand the definition of American religious freedom: "Giving [the Jews] liberty, we cannot refuse the Lutherans and Papists," New Amsterdam's colonial governor, Peter Stuyvesant, concluded. And their fear of assimilating was justified. Sarna finds that nearly 30 percent of known marriages of Jews between 1776 and 1840 involved a non-Jewish spouse.

Benjamin Balint is assistant editor of Commentary *magazine.*

Meanwhile, the notions of synagogue and community, until then virtually synonymous, became increasingly decoupled, and there were few leaders to confront demographic or theological threats to the nascent community. "Rabbis," Sarna reminds us, "did not regularly grace American pulpits until 1840," when German Jews began to immigrate en masse.

The German-trained rabbis led by Isaac Mayer Wise were the first to come, and they brought with them Reform Judaism and its drastic departures from what is now called Orthodoxy. Reform's definitive 1885 "Pittsburgh Platform" insisted the Bible reflected only the "primitive ideas of its own age," rejected ritual commandments in favor of a progressive social justice (which Sarna calls "the Jewish equivalent of the Protestant Social Gospel"), and urged American Jews to "consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community." In an 1898 statement, the Reform movement formally joined to this a firm anti-Zionism: "America is our Zion. . . . The mission of Judaism is spiritual, not political."

Sarna shows that the birth of Conservative Judaism—and of its Jewish Theological Seminary, reorganized and revitalized by Solomon Schechter beginning in 1902—represented a turning back from these principles toward traditionalism. Along the way, it supplied further evidence that American Jews could not unite beneath any kind of central religious authority. Reform's rapid spread was ultimately checked not by its Conservative opponents, but by the arrival of some two million East European Jews between 1881 and 1914 fleeing state-sponsored pogroms and

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Bettmann / CORBIS

Above: Pushcarts on Orchard Street in 1923. Below: Jewish children in Minneapolis in 1908.

poverty. By 1918, the Jewish population in New York City alone exceeded that of Western Europe, South America, and Palestine combined. This large swell of immigrants was stopped by the restrictive quotas Congress imposed between 1917 and 1924, but not before flooding American Jewish communities with radical antireligious socialists (who saw their Reform German predecessors as hopelessly bourgeois) and pious talmudists (who thought Reform rabbis religiously ignorant).

The decimation of Europe's Jews in World War II, as the 1949 *American Jewish Year Book* made clear, "left the United States the center of world Judaism." Sarna devotes much space to the postwar years, during which Jews enjoyed broader social acceptance, entrance into the suburban middle class, a growing interest in Jewish theologians like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and the recognition of Judaism as the country's "third faith"—a process described in Will Herberg's aptly named 1955 sociological study, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*.

Sarna makes Israel's 1967 Six Day War the last major turning point of his story because of its enormously galvanizing impact on American-Jewish consciousness. In its aftermath, as the historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz said, many Jews found that "their ideas of war, which had been shaped by Vietnam, were irrelevant to Israel," which became the object of intensified solidarity and philanthropy.

American Judaism is the most ambitious treatment of the subject since Nathan Glazer's 1957 book of the same title, considered a classic of the genre. But if Sarna's is richer in its smooth synthesis of wide-ranging empirical and scholarly data, it is poorer in interpretive power. Sarna's writing style tends toward the textbookish. When he lays out the sides of a historical controversy (for example, could American Jews have done more to rescue their brethren under Nazi rule?), he consistently declines to render a judgment. And Sarna's method, which takes many of its cues from the great American Jewish historian Jacob Rader Marcus and from Sydney Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People*, cannot be called highly original.

Sarna's focus on institutions, moreover, prevents him from developing the keen sensitivity Glazer displayed to definitional problems such as whether "Judaism remains an ethnic commitment more than a transcendent faith"; to political concerns such as the relation of Jews to liberalism; and to cultural questions such as how the Jews (as Irving Howe once observed) managed to export elements of their culture to America, just as they were losing it themselves.

Perhaps most tellingly, it has been decades since American Jewry could be usefully comprehended by means of "waves of immigration." The differences between the children of the Sephardic, German, and East European immigrants has long since disappeared—and Sarna, for all his admirable thoroughness, hasn't replaced the immigration model with a fresh analysis. If the best historical works afford us a map of the current terrain, *American Judaism* provides a detailed but not especially useful cartography. ♦

Minnesota Historical Society / CORBIS

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All That Jazz

Why Nat Hentoff remains a great critic.

BY TED GIOIA

Musicians and critics go together "like a horse and carriage," as in the old Sinatra song. Unfortunately, they often pull in opposite directions. In a surprisingly candid discussion at a recent New York convention of jazz educators, pianist Arturo O'Farrill surprised no one when he pointed out that musicians often sneer at the writers who review them. Though I've learned a tremendous amount about jazz from people who never blew a blue note—and seen brilliant performers espouse narrow-minded views about criticism—the divide that O'Farrill described is all too real.

American Music Is
by Nat Hentoff
DaCapo, 320 pp., $16.95

I can only guess how Nat Hentoff would fare on a musical-ear test. But I have no doubt that he, perhaps more than any other jazz writer active today, has earned the respect of musicians. He often gained their friendship as well: an even rarer achievement when so many divisions (color of skin being only the most obvious) tend to separate people in the worlds of jazz. Hentoff's close relations with Paul Desmond, Charles Mingus, and Cecil Taylor—the whole range of modern jazz, from euphony to cacophony, is summed up in those names—testify to the catholicity of his tastes and his ability to gain the confidence of some of the toughest figures in twentieth-century music.

Ted Gioia is a jazz pianist and historian. His books include The History of Jazz *and* West Coast Jazz.

Even before Kenny G wore swaddling clothes, Hentoff had established his insider credentials. His 1955 oral history, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, written in collaboration with Nat Shapiro, still stands as the most fully successful attempt to let jazz musicians tell their story in their own words. For historians, this book is as close to holy writ as you can get, the essence of insiderness—a knowledge of the real workings of jazz that Hentoff also demonstrated repeatedly during the mid-1950s as associate editor of the journal *Down Beat*. He followed this stint with an even more dicey commitment to producing jazz records while running the Candid label. This phase of his career lasted only a couple years, but during this brief spell, Hentoff showed an unfailing knack for championing the right musician at the right time, even when commercial considerations dictated otherwise.

The same qualities that distinguished Hentoff's work as a record producer also stand out in his writing. In a world of expediency, he remains a man of conviction. This is most evident in his political journalism, where Hentoff has never hesitated to make enemies on the left or the right. But the same dedication shapes his music writing. I suspect Hentoff possesses a masochistic streak, and he has built his career trying to lay down bricks in a bed of mud. But in both arenas, he is always refreshing.

Hentoff's latest collection has the unpromising name *American Music Is*. Are we being asked to fill in the blank? Or perhaps the title is a mere existential statement. But after the enigma of the cover, general readers will find many familiar names: Hentoff offers his views (along with anecdotes drawn from personal experience) of Duke Ellington, Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Bob Dylan, Louis Armstrong, Willie Nelson, and others. And even seasoned jazz cats could learn some new names from these pages: Sonny LaRosa, for instance, who in his mid-

Jack Dupree at the 100 Club. CORBIS.

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seventies teaches young children to swing as part of America's Youngest Jazz Band; or Scott Robinson, a young player who pledges allegiance to the C-melody saxophone, a sweet-sounding horn, no longer manufactured, that fell out of favor before the flappers of the Jazz Age had even stopped flapping.

Hentoff has always been the champion of the outsider, the idealist, and sometimes the merely prickly. No doubt this explains his attraction to jazz in the first place. And for the same reason, Hentoff (despite his persistence) will never be convincing as a commentator on country music. He may love the Heartland, but the instincts of this "Boston Boy" (the title of his 1986 memoir) will always keep him beyond the pale.

There are a few minor flaws in *American Music Is*, but none that should dissuade the prospective reader. A little careful editing would have fixed the repetitions. We are treated to an interesting account of Hentoff's first reaction to Elvis Presley (he mistook him on the radio for Mississippi blues singer Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup). But then the very same anecdote is repeated a few pages later. A piece on Sinatra refers to his "current guitarist." Ol' Blue Eyes died six years ago and is currently making do without a working band. Readers will understand that many of these pieces were published a few years back, but even so, some scrutiny and updating might have been expected.

But the timing of this collection couldn't be better. Hentoff recently earned the rare distinction of being named a "Jazz Master" by the National Endowment for the Arts—the first critic to garner this honor. Readers doubting that a journalist could merit such an award can take this volume as evidence for the defense. I now possess half a shelf of Nat Hentoff's books. Each one has its merits. But for those unfamiliar with this uncompromising critic and his prescient views, *American Music Is* may be the best place to start. If the divide between music critics and the players themselves can ever be bridged, it will be through works such as this. ♦

Ireland Everywhere

Pete McCarthy seeks the Irish around the world.

BY MARIA KELLY

With *The Road to McCarthy*, Pete McCarthy has produced a travel book in the vein of Bill Bryson and Paul Theroux—in this case an account of one man's search for the history of his name. "McCarthy" is a common name in the southwest of Ireland where the McCarthys used to be kings, back when Ireland still had kingdoms. Since then the clan has had a checkered history, reflecting the history of the Irish diaspora. McCarthy's quest takes him from England to Dublin, to Tangier, Australia, Tasmania, Montana, Montserrat, Alaska, and finally back to the place where the odyssey of the McCarthy clan started, the Beara peninsula in West Cork. Along the way, he encounters a variety of strange people and exotic landscapes in true travel writer fashion.

The Road to McCarthy
Around the World in Search of Ireland
by Pete McCarthy
Fourth Estate, 368 pp., $25.95

But *The Road to McCarthy* is a travel book where the exotic and strange are often to be found in the most ordinary of circumstances, and most often in pub stories. Beginning in Cobh, Ireland, McCarthy is particularly attracted to two stories: that of the Young Irelanders, whose failed 1848 rebellion led to banishment in Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania, and to the less well-known story of the Bearna miners who, in the 1880s, fled economic hardship at home and headed west to Montana and Alaska. At the end of the book, as he contemplates the poignant story of a young McCarthy boy who died in appalling circumstances in a nineteenth-century penal colony for children in Tasmania, the author realizes that this is the point to which his search has led him: "A name can connect us to people and places beyond our experience, and take us close to a specific, singular identity through which we can imagine a distant place and time."

With an Irish Catholic mother from West Cork and an English Protestant father, Pete McCarthy grew up in Warrington, southwest of Manchester in England, but spent his childhood summers on a farm near Drimoleague in West Cork. His mixed identity leads to some personal confusion and, at times, apprehension (as when he finds himself in an Irish pub in New York surrounded by Glasgow Celtic fans).

But the Irish diaspora has ensured that such mixed origins characterize many McCarthys—indeed, the Irish generally. McCarthy has already mined this double identity in his successful first book, *McCarthy's Bar*, where he frolicked around Ireland in search of pubs bearing the name "McCarthy," an often hilarious look by a semi-outsider at the quiddities and oddities of Irish life.

In *The Road to McCarthy*, the author's search for his dynasty begins with a visit to the purported chief of the McCarthy clan, living in exile in Tangier. Most of the human interest and humor here is provided by the author's relations with a pair of Moroccan guides who attach themselves to him for the duration of his visit and whom he suspects of wanting to hijack him for his kidneys. We eventually meet the strange and eccentric McCarthy Mór, who describes himself

Maria Kelly is an Irish writer living in Belgium.

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[illegible] in Australia.

as the last "goose" of "the wild geese" (a group of eighteenth-century Irish political exiles), and who clearly has found a suitable home in the whacked-out atmosphere of Tangier.

Next stop is New York, through which so many Irish emigrants passed on their way West. We encounter the city through McCarthy's eyes: a –hockey game in Madison Square Garden (where, used to the thuggery of English hooligans, he marvels at the amiable, violence-free drinking of the spectators); the eccentric denizens of the New York Public Library; the New York City policemen whose weight sends out the menacing subliminal message: "Don't run away. We can't chase you, so we'll have to shoot." St. Patrick's Day is described with all its rituals but in the end perceived as a tradition frozen in a vision of an Ireland that no longer exists.

From New York, McCarthy picks up the other route taken by his forefathers and heads to Tasmania in what proves to be the darker side of his journey—crisscrossing the island and revisiting the places associated with the Young Irelanders. Here, in what is perhaps the best section of the book, we get a vivid sense of the island's beauty, and of its desolate, silent landscapes. At Queenstown nobody talks, in sharp contrast to the denizens of the other Queenstown (now Cobh) in County Cork. At Macquarie Harbour, he hears the story of the convict Edward Pearce, who survived the wilderness by cannibalism. We revisit the Point Puer, the prison for young boys where the chosen method of treatment was absolute silence.

The bleak and stark beauty of Tasmania is balanced by the sunshine and noise of his next stop, Montserrat. There in the shadow of the [illegible] that exploded in 1997 leaving [illegible] the island uninhabitable, we meet a loquacious people in whom Irish and West Indian inimitably meet. We follow the McCarthy trail north to Montana, whose snowy landscape would seem an even more unlikely home for Irish emigrant miners. But in 1900 Butte was the most Irish city in America. Facing the statue in Helena erected to Thomas Meagher—a convict in Van Diemen's Land and later governor of Montana—McCarthy finds another end of the Young Irelanders' journey. Yet further north, in Alaska, the miners' trail runs out in the desolate town of McCarthy, supposedly named for a Beara man who may have settled there in the 1890s.

At times, the conversation palls in *The Road to McCarthy* as the author's compulsion to be funny leads him to extract humor from conversations and encounters best forgotten. Too often McCarthy presumes he is talking to people who share the same cultural baggage he carries—which is a curious oversight, for his cultural allusions fix Pete McCarthy as primarily an Englishman, the references to contemporary Ireland being few and somewhat clichéd. At other times McCarthy seems to lose focus, getting lost in the innumerable detours of his journey and giving a "one damned thing after another" account of his trips.

EPA / Landov / Dean Lewins

Yet McCarthy's finely tuned sense of place and sharp humor triumph. He can give pertinent and often hilarious expression to familiar travel experiences. Visiting America, he remarks on the generous breakfasts, the friendly people, and the powerful showers ("Why do American showers knock you over, while ours have all the oomph of a dolly's watering can?"). Like any good travel writer, he has a keen eye for foibles and an acute ear for conversational tones. On a flight to Tangier he meets a hearty English businessman with a Winnie-the-Pooh tie (he's called "Winnie" within a few hours) who keeps telling his fellow passengers from Estonia "very boring things in a loud, slow voice with all definite and indefinite articles removed, like whisky trader talking to injuns about heap powerful thunder-sticks."

In the end McCarthy's forte as a travel writer is his uncanny ability to be the recipient of zany stories, which he retells with zest, beginning with the true story about the unemployed man in Cobh who won the Lotto and bought "the fecking dole office" that he had till then frequented, converting it into a Titanic-theme bar. Perhaps the funniest is the story McCarthy hears, toward the end of his quest, in a pub in Tipperary called, yes, McCarthy's. Recounted by a man reminiscing about his days as an itinerant circus hand in Britain, it is a hilarious narrative of mishaps with ostriches, elephants, giraffes, Shetland ponies, and chimps. It is the kind of story you hear only in Ireland. For that, if nothing else, *The Road to McCarthy* is worth its price. ♦

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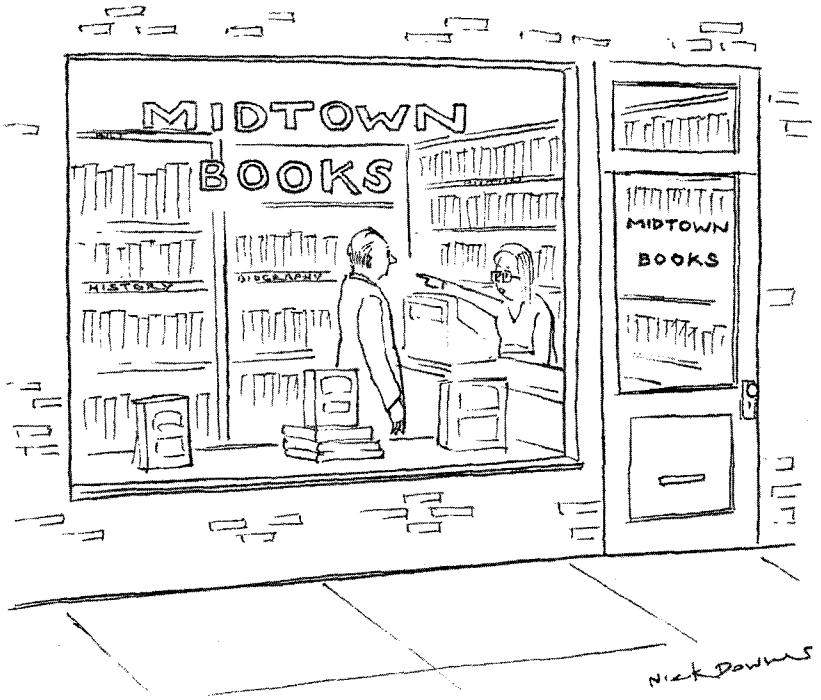
The Standard Reader



"Crossword puzzles? You might look under 'colossal wastes of time.'"

Books in Brief

Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature's Favorite **by Tibor R. Machan (Rowman & Littlefield, 144 pp., $19.95).** Tibor R. Machan doesn't like the animal-rights or radical environmental movements, and with good cause. Both exhibit anti-human attitudes, he writes, for each rejects "the idea that human beings should be the primary concern of human beings."

A Chapman University professor, Machan begins his slim volume on a strong note with a cogent critique of the philosophical underpinnings of animal-liberation philosophy. He makes the interesting point that to fabricate a moral equality between humans and animals, animal liberationists obsess on our similarities—such as that both humans and animals feel pain—when a proper and rational analysis would focus instead on our substantive and morally relevant differences. For example, only humans can "produce a culture of science, art, athletics." We "alone have the capacity for free choice and the responsibility to act ethically." Indeed, Machan asserts, "human agency" is "the sine qua non of moral worth."

In contrast, animals live amorally. They may pursue interests, such as filling their bellies and protecting their young. But one cannot possess rights without assuming the concomitant obligation to respect the rights of others, which is totally beyond the ken of animals as they struggle to survive. Animal liberationists and radical environmentalists know this, of course, and so "don't confront [animals] with any moral arguments [about their actions] no matter how politically incorrect the animals may be toward one another."

Unfortunately, after a promising start, Machan turns to pushing his radical libertarian philosophy and veers badly off course. He agrees it is wrong to abuse animals but doubts that laws are the way to prevent such cruelty—because they will increase the power of bureaucrats to "run our lives." But without laws, how could we prevent the horse from being whipped to death or the cat tortured for kicks? Machan believes it would be sufficient to accuse the abuser of a lack of moral character.

The book totally collapses when the author leaps head first into libertarian never-never land in discussing environmental issues. Decrying the "tragedy of the commons," he argues that the government should "sell off" our unwisely held "common assets—lands, parks, beaches, buildings, forests, lakes, and such—to private parties." Yes, Machan seriously believes that letting Bill Gates or others rich enough to buy Yellowstone, Central Park, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, or, for that matter, the neighborhood green would be a good thing by liberating our posterity from the burdensome costs of their maintenance. It is such a ridiculous notion—and one he supports with only the barest ideological assertions—that it is hard to take anything Machan writes thereafter seriously.

With radical animal liberationists and environmentalists increasingly impeding human welfare, a book that robustly defends human exceptionalism is sorely needed. But Machan's hyper-libertarianism isn't the answer. Indeed, his social Darwinist view of human community is as bad as the misanthropic philosophies he debunks.

—Wesley J. Smith

Eagle Dreams: Searching for Legends in Wild Mongolia **by Stephen J. Bodio (Lyons, 216 pp., $22.95).** Excerpted in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 2001, Bodio's travelogue chronicles an expedition to Mongolia to hunt deer, wolves, and foxes—with eagles. He intersperses his recollections of exhilarating landscapes and breathtaking sportsmanship with the tiny details of the everyday life of people who have preserved the practice of hunting with eagles for centuries at the frozen frontier of western Mongolia. During a visit to a former black mar-

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ket, "a residue of old planned economy times," the hunting party "stopped in front of hundreds of identical little books, each bound in faux red leather." When asked about the books, their local companion replied that they are "'the works of Lenin. There are too many in this country, from when the Russians were here. Now it is sold by weight, for toilet paper. We read Lenin'—he mimed study—'and then we answer him,' miming that. 'Good quality too.'" A few pages later, the author proudly records that "eventually, I answered Lenin without bothering to read him." Tidbits like this—and the clear explanations of the technical details of the hunt—will amply reward the reader who ventures into such odd literary territory.

—Katherine Mangu-Ward

***America's Untapped Resource: Low-Income Students in Higher Education*, edited by Richard D. Kahlenberg (Century Foundation, 199 pp., $14.95).** With college costs rising, and a growing number of students taking more than four years to finish, we are rapidly approaching the advent of the quarter-million-dollar bachelor's degree. This development could well begin to roll back the creeping gains in college matriculation rates we've seen over the past forty years, and it represents a real threat to national prosperity. Further, with more and more students graduating with enormous college debt, financing college has become a disincentive to marriage, family, home ownership, and future education—all with serious social costs. Hardest hit in this college-cost squeeze are the poor, who are deterred by education's cost.

The culprits, according to *America's Untapped Resource*, are federal college loan programs. These programs were meant to open the ivied gates to lower-income students, a Robin Hood effort to get the rich to subsidize the education of the poor. Instead, both the poor and the rich have ended up subsidizing the middle class. The rich will go to college regardless of the cost, but the infusion of free money into the system has inflated prices well beyond the means of many low-income students.

Meanwhile, the college admissions process has a built-in bias for middle- and high-income students whose families may become future donors, further reducing the aid available to well-prepared low-income students. The solution, according to *America's Untapped Resource*, is economic affirmative action for the academically prepared low-income student, which would focus resources on kids who need them, and a college price tag that more accurately reflects the cost of a four-year education, rather than the present system of loans and other aid to cover the price inflation. Policymakers may also want to encourage no-frills universities that deliver a basic education in a limited number of subjects with few of the amenities that have turned many college campuses into four-year resorts—what community colleges were meant to be before they became job-training and remedial high-school programs. Any discussion of increasing low-income access to college has to start in grade school (as editor Richard Kahlenberg and his contributors recognize), where the college matriculation gap first takes shape. That particular gap continues to widen.

—Justin Torres

***Affirmative Action Is Dead: Long Live Affirmative Action* by Faye J. Crosby (Yale University Press, 331 pp., $30).** Academics engaged in the debate over affirmative action and racial preferences typically put forth some form of the argument that the benefit outweighs the harm. But why, asks psychology professor Faye Crosby in *Affirmative Action Is Dead*, has it become a settled assumption that affirmative action is harmful, as a routine government function? Crosby insists that opposition to the correction of sex and race disparities in employment and college admissions arises not just from prejudice but from misinformation about how preferential-treatment programs operate. "Just teach people how affirmative action really operates, and controversy will die down," she writes.

A few pages later, Crosby describes—favorably, of course—a set-aside program. In the 1994 auction of narrow-band radio licenses, businesses owned by women and minorities were allowed to purchase up to thirty licenses at half price. "The program was decried as a 'huge giveaway,' but appearances turned out to be deceptive. By opening license purchase to enhanced competition, the program actually forced nondesignated bidders to pay more than they had previously done. The result was a $45 million increase in government revenues." In fact, few nondesignated businesses celebrated the increase in government revenue at their expense, and certainly many economists would disagree with Crosby's set-asides as a boon to competition.

Crosby imagines the debilitating effects of stereotyping can be ameliorated—provided administrators constantly reassure beneficiaries that they were chosen solely for their abilities. Administrators also should make sure to justify affirmative action in terms of the benefits of diversity, to avoid messy questions of merit. How all this is not misinformation she does not explain.

Affirmative Action Is Dead makes strong points about public ignorance of the regulations that govern affirmative action, and the book's discussion of psychological studies examining how preferential treatment affects individuals adds much-needed texture to the usual race-economics gloss. The glaring failure of the book, however, is its dismissive treatment of thoughtful critics of affirmative action. Indeed, Crosby seems to suggest, at one point, that Americans can oppose preferences only by harboring at least an unconscious racism.

—Beth Henary

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From the *New York Times*, May 6, 2004

Not a Parody

An Irreverent Comedy Is Seeking Christians

Trying to Tap a Newly Minted Market

By SHARON WAXMAN

LOS ANGELES, May 5 — In a darkened screening room where movie-altering decisions are made, the newly minted Christian audience is under consideration by Hollywood experts.

MGM is holding one of a series of screenings of "Saved!," a small, irreverent comedy, set to open on May 28, about an evangelical Christian high school. But the movie is proving difficult to market. Though Hollywood is eager to capitalize on the Christian audience that emerged in huge numbers to see "The Passion of the Christ," movie executives are unsure about what kinds of movies will appeal to it. Does "Saved!" fit the bill?

In "Saved!," Mandy Moore and Macaulay Culkin (in a wheelchair) are siblings attending the school, a Midwestern institution where "Jesus loves you" is a mantra — and an order. A giant cutout of Jesus looms over the campus. Pastor Skip, played by Martin Donovan, is the spiritual leader of the school, handsome, hip and given to complimenting his students on being "phat."

Macaulay Culkin with Jena Malone, left, and Mandy Moore in 'Saved!'

Diyah Pera

Jena Malone plays a teenager who becomes pregnant while trying to cure her boyfriend of his homosexuality and save him from damnation. Her mother, a divorcée played by Mary-Louise Parker, is trying to be right with God but has an affair with Pastor Skip.

The movie is complicated, and its message open to interpretation. No one at MGM seems certain of how it will be received.

"I love this movie, but it is so hard to figure out who the audience is," said Peter Adee, president of worldwide marketing at MGM. "It has a certain Christian appeal, but it's also a little irreverent. It has a pure Christian message in the middle, which is tolerant. But on its surface, if you say it's a Christian movie, a lot

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of people will go, 'I'm out.' And religious people will say, 'I'm out, because it seems like they're making fun.' "

So MGM executives have been trying what they call the "Hail Mary" approach, throwing every possible hook into the advertising and publicity for the film, working especially hard to reach the Christian audience that turned out for "The Passion of the Christ."

So far the studio has screened "Saved!" for a gay audience, which loved it, MGM marketing executives say, and for religious leaders, who had mixed opinions. On this particular night in late April, the screening — in a private theater in the studio's Century City skyscraper — is for "youth leaders": student council members, athletes, high school activists, many of whom identify themselves as Christian.

They gathered for soft drinks and guacamole after the screening to tell MGM's marketing team what they thought.

"I think it portrayed Christian people as unaccepting, which they are," said Ashley Harvey, an 18-year-old student at Beverly Hills High School. "I'm Christian, and I agree that there are people who are like that, who take it to an extreme."

Ellen Badger, also 18, a freshman from Missouri at the University of Southern California, disagreed. "I feel it alienates the group that it's about," she said. "I'm surprised religious people weren't offended by it."

But Jennifer Eng, another freshman at U.S.C., said she knew "a lot of Christians who would be offended by this."

"I'm not angry," she said. "But I don't know how other people would feel."

Ms. Harvey said, "I feel like I was almost being attacked, like it was wrong to be a Christian."

Ms. Eng: "The problem is, it uses an extreme example to represent the whole group, which is when I think it can be offensive."

Slightly older viewers had a different take. Kaitlyn Berry, 20, and Kerianne Connor, 21, both juniors at U.C.L.A., were confused at first about whether the movie was satiric or sincere.

"At first we weren't sure whether it was O.K. to laugh," said Ms. Berry. "Then I was like, 'They're really going out on a limb.' "

The two women talked about "The Passion of the Christ" and whether part of its vast audience would be

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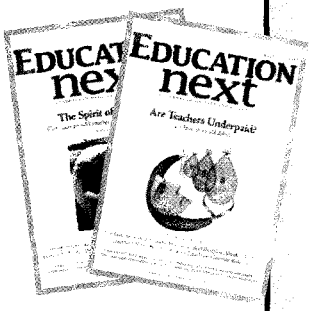

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—Daniel T. Willingham

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—William Howell

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—Checker E. Finn Jr., Sarah C. Glover, and Lisa Graham Keegan

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